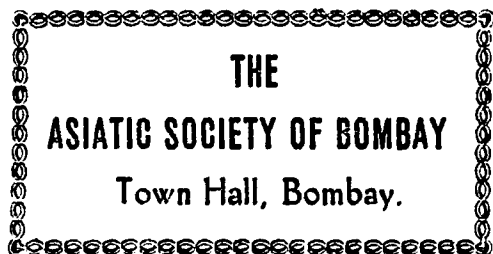




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STRAY PEARLS



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MEMOIRS OF
MARGARET DE RIBAUMONT
VISCOUNTESS OF BELLAISE

BY
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STRAY PEARLS.

THE MEMOIRS OF MARGARET DE RIBAUMONT,
VISCOUNTESS OF BELLAISE.

CHAPTER I.

INSIDE PARIS.

Annora's Narrative.



My sister has asked me to fill up the account of the days of the Fronde with what I saw within the city. She must permit me to do so in English, for I have taken care to forget my French; and if I write perilous stuff for French folk to read she need not translate it.

I will begin with that Twelfth-day morning when we were wakened by more noise and racket than even Paris could generally produce. There had been a little tumult about once a week for the last six months, so we could endure a great deal, but this was, plainly a much larger one. Some of the servants who went out brought word that the Queen had carried off the King in order to be revenged on Paris, and that the people, in a rage, were

breaking the carriages of her suite to pieces, plundering the waggons, and beating, if not killing, every one in them. We were of course mightily troubled for my sister, and being only two women we could not go out in quest of her, while each rumour we heard was more terrible than the last. Some even said that the Louvre had been sacked and plundered; but old Sir Andrew Macniven, who had made his way through the mob like a brave old Scottish knight, brought us word that he could assure us that our own Queen was safe in her own apartments, and that there had been no attack on the palace.

Still he had himself seen carriages plundered and broken to pieces by the mob, and the gates were closely guarded. Seeing our distress, he was about to go with the Abbé to the Louvre, to learn whether my sister and her son were there, when one of the servants came up to tell us that M. Clément Darpent requested to see my mother, having brought us tidings of Madame la Vicomtesse.

My poor mother never could endure the name of M. Darpent, because she did not like my brother's friendship with any one not noble, but she was as glad to see him then as if he had been a Montmorency or a Coucy.

I always liked his manners, for they were even then more English than French. Though going through all due form, he always seemed to respect himself too much to let any one be supercilious with him; and however she

might begin at a vast distance, she always ended by talking to him just as if he were, as she called it, our equal. As if he were not infinitely the superior of the hundreds of trumpery little apes of nobles who strutted about the galleries of the Louvre, with nothing to do but mayhap to carry the Queen's fan, or curl her poodle's tail!

I see I have been writing just as I felt in those fervent days of my youth, when the quick blood would throb at my heart and burn in my cheek at any slight to the real manhood and worth I saw in him, and preference for the poor cringing courtiers I despised. The thought of those old days has brought me back to the story as all then seemed to me—the high-spirited, hot-tempered maiden, who had missed all her small chances of even being mild and meek in the troubles at home, and to whom Paris was a grievous place of banishment, only tolerable by the aid of my dear brother and my poor Meg, when she was not too French and too Popish for me. But that was not her fault, poor thing.

My mother, however, was grateful enough to Clément Darpent for the nonce, when he told how he had seen Meg safe beyond the gates. Moreover, he assured us that so far from 8000 horse being ready to storm the city (I should like to have seen them! Who ever took a fortress with a charge of horse?) barely 200 had escorted their Majesties. The Coadjutor had shown M. Blâncemesnil a

note from the Queen telling him so, and summoning him to St. Germain.

It was likely, M. Darpent said, that the city would be besieged, but he did not foresee any peril for us, and he promised to watch over us, as he would over his own mother, and that he would give us continual intelligence so that we might provide for our safety. It was amusing to see how eagerly my mother accepted this offer, though she had almost forbidden him the house when my brother left us.

I am sure my mother was as uneasy as any of us when he did not appear on the morning after he had gone with his father on the deputation to St. Germain. However, he did come later on in the afternoon, bringing a note from Meg. He had not seen her, only Nicolas and little Gaspard, and he, like all the rest, was greatly incensed at the manner in which the magistrates had been treated. His father had, he said, caught a violent cold, and had been forced to go to bed at once. In fact it really was the poor old man's death-stroke, and he never quitted his chamber, hardly even his bed.

The Parliament, in a rage, put forth a decree, declaring the Cardinal an enemy to the State, and ordering him to leave the Court and kingdom on that very day, calling on all loyal subjects to fall on him, and forbidding any one to give him shelter.

We heard loud acclamations, which made us think

something unusual was going on, and it was the publication of this precious edict. I wondered who they thought was going to attend to it when M. Darpent brought in a copy. And my mother began to cry and talk about Lord Strafford. I had to think of Eustace and bite my tongue to keep my patience at our noble "thorough" Wentworth being likened to that base cringing Italian.

Clément Darpent said, however, that every one had passed it by acclamation, except Bernai, who was a mere cook, and gave fine dinners to such a set of low, loose creatures that he was called "*le cabaretier de la cour*." Moreover, they proceeded to give orders for levying 4000 horse and 10,000 foot. This really did mean civil war.

"I knew it," said my mother; "it is the next step after denouncing the King's minister. We shall see you next armed *cap-à-pie*, like our young advocates at home, all for the King's behalf, according to them."

Of course she was thinking of Harry Merrycourt, but she was surprised by the answer.

"No, Madam; nothing shall induce me to bear arms against the King. So much have I learned from the two living persons whom I esteem the most."

"And they are?" asked my lady.

"My mother and *monsieur votre fils*," he replied.

And I could not help crying out—

"Oh sir, you are right. I know that Harry Merry-

court feels *now* that nothing can justify rebellion, and that he little knew whither he should be led."

"And yet," said he, clasping his hands together with intensity of fervour, "when all is rotten to the core, venal, unjust, tyrannical, how endure without an endeavour at a remedy? Yet it may be that an imposing attitude will prevail! Self-defence without a blow."

It seemed as if such war as they were likely to wage could do no one much damage, for they actually chose as their generalissimo that ridiculous little sickly being, the Prince de Conty, who had quarrelled with the Court about a cardinal's hat, and had run away from his mother's apron string at St. Germain to his sister's at Paris.

On recalling it, all was a mere farce together, and the people were always stringing together lampoons in rhyme, and singing them in the streets. One still rings in my head, about a dissolute impoverished Marquis d'Elbeuf, one of the house of Lorraine, whom the prospect of pay induced to offer his services to the Parliament.

"Le pauvre Monseigneur d'Elbeuf,
Qui n'avait aucun ressource,
Et qui ne mangeait que du bœuf.
Le pauvre Monseigneur d'Elbeuf,
A maintenant un habit neuf
Et quelques justes dans sa bourse.
Le pauvre Monseigneur d'Elbeuf,
Qui n'avait aucun ressource."

There was more sense in taking the Duke of Bouillon,

though he was not his brother, M. de Turenne. These young men were in high spirits. You will find no traces of their feelings in the memoirs of the time, for of course nothing of the kind would be allowed to pass the censors of the press. But there was a wonderful sense of liberty of speech and tongue during that siege. The younger *gens de la robe*, as they were called, who, like Clément Darpent, had read their Livy and Plutarch, were full of ideas of public virtue, and had meetings among themselves, where M. Darpent dwelt on what he had imbibed from my brother of English notions of duty to God, the King, and the State. It may seem strange that a cavalier family like ourselves should have infused notions which were declared to smack of revolution, but the constitution we had loved and fought for was a very Utopia to these young French advocates. They, with the sanguine dreams of youth, hoped that the Fronde was the beginning of a better state of things, when all offices should be obtained by merit, never bought and sold, and many of them were inventions of the Court for the express purpose of sale. The great Cardinal had actually created forty offices for counsellors merely in order to sell them and their reversions! The holders of these were universally laughed at, and not treated as on a level with the old hereditary office-bearers, who at least might think themselves of some use.

We smile sadly now to think of the grand aspirations,

noble visions, and brave words of those young advocates, each of whom thought himself a very Epaminondas, or Gracchus, though M^r. Darpent, on looking back, had to confess that his most enthusiastic supporters were among the younger brothers, or those with less fortunate fathers, for whom the Paulette had never been paid, or who felt it very hard to raise. He himself brought sincere ardour for his own part, and was full of soaring hope and self-devotion, though I suspect his father would soon have silenced him if the poor man had been able to think of anything beyond his own sick-chamber.

The real absurdity, or rather the sadness, of it was, as we two saw, that the fine folk in whom the Parliament put its trust merely wanted to spite the Cardinal, and cared not a rush for the Parliament, unlike my Lord Essex, and our other Roundhead noblemen, who, right or wrong, were in honest earnest, and cared as much about the Bill of Rights and all the rest of their demands as Sir Harry Vane or General Cromwell himself, whereas these were traitors in heart to the cause they pretended to espouse. Even the Coadjutor, who was the prime mover of all, only wanted to be chief of a party.

One part of his comedy, which I should like to have seen, was the conducting the Duchesses of Longueville and Bouillon along the Grève to the Hôtel de Ville to ask protection, though I do not know what for.

However, there they were, exquisitely dressed, with

Madame de Longueville's beautiful hair daintily dishevelled, on foot, and each with a child in her arms. Crowds followed them with shouts of ecstasy, and the Coadjutor further gratified the world by having a shower of pistoles thrown from the windows of the Hôtel de Ville.

It was good sport to hear Sir Andrew Macniven discourse on the sight, declaring that the ladies looked next door to angels, and kenned it full well too, and that he marvelled what their gudemen would have said to see them mak' sic a raree show of themselves to all the loons in Paris!

The streets soon became as quiet as they ever were, and we could go about as usual, except when we had warning of any special cause for disturbance. We were anxious to know how poor little Madame d'Aubépine was getting on, and, to our surprise, we found her tolerably cheerful. In truth, she had really tamed the Croquelebois! As she said afterwards in her little pathetic tone, so truly French, when they both so truly loved Monsieur le Comte (wretch that he was) how could they differ? You see he was not present to cause jealousies, and when Madame Croquelebois found that Cécile never blamed him or murmured she began to be uneasy at his neglect and unkindness.

Though, of course, at that moment he was out of reach, being in the army that was blockading us. Not that we should ever have found out that we were

blockaded, if we could have got any letters from any one, except for the scarcity of firewood. My mother wanted much to get to our own Queen, but the approaches to the Louvre were watched lest she should communicate with the Regent; and we were cut off from her till M. Darpent gave his word for us, and obtained for us a pass. And, oh! it was a sad sight to see the great courts and long galleries left all dreary and empty. It made me think of Whitehall and of Windsor, though we little knew that at that very time there was worse there than even desolation.

And when at last we reached our poor Queen's apartments, there was not a spark of fire in them. She was a guest there. She had no money, and all the wood had either been used up or pillaged; and there we found her, wrapped in a great fur cloak, sitting by the bed where was the little Lady Henrietta.

When my mother cried out with grief that the child should be ill, the poor Queen replied with that good-humoured laugh with which she met all the inconveniences that concerned herself alone: "Oh no, Madame, not ill, only cold! We cannot get any firewood, and so bed is the safest place for my little maid, who cares not if she can have her mother to play with her! Here is a new playfellow for thee, *ma mie*. Sweet Nan will sit by thee, and make thee sport, while I talk to her mother."

So the child made the big four-post bed, all curtained round, into a fortress, and I besieged her there, till she screamed with glee, while the Queen took my mother's arm, and they paced the rooms together, sadly discussing the times and the utter lack of news from home, when the last tidings had been most alarming. Poor lady! I think it was a comfort to her, for she loved my mother; but we could not but grieve to see her in such a plight. As we went home we planned that we would carry a faggot in the carriage the next day, and that I would take it upstairs to her. And so I actually did, but the sentry insisted on "knowing what I was carrying hidden in a cloak, and when he saw it, the honest man actually burst into tears that the daughter of Henri IV. should be in such straits. The Queen kissed me for it, and said I was like the good girl in Madame d'Aulnoy's tales, and she would fain be the benevolent fairy to reward me. And then the little Princess insisted that I was Capuchon Rouge, and that she was my Grandmother Wolf, and after making her great eyes at me, she ate me up with kisses over and over again! Ah! how happy children can be. It was strange to remember that this was the way King Charles's little daughter spent that 30th of January!

We had told M. Darpent of the condition in which we found the Queen, and he told the Coadjutor, who went himself to see her, and then stirred up the Parlia-

ment to send her regular supplies both of firing and provisions, so that she never suffered again in the same way.

Each day increased our anxiety for His Sacred Majesty. Lord Jermyn made his way into Paris, and came to consult with my mother, telling her that he had little doubt that the iniquitous deed had been consummated, and between them, by way of preparing the unhappy Queen, they made up a story that the King had been led out to execution, but had been rescued by the populace. I could not see that this would be of much use in softening the blow; in fact, I thought all these delicate falsehoods only made the suspense worse, but I was told that I was a mere downright English country lass, with no notion of the refinements such things required with persons of sensibility.

So I told them, if ever I were in trouble, all I asked of them was to let me know the worst at once. One great pleasure came to the Queen at this time in the arrival of the Duke of York, who made his way into Paris, and arriving in the midst of dinner, knelt before his mother. He knew no more of his father than we did, and the next day, Sir Andrew Macniven, at the Queen's urgent entreaty, undertook to go to St. Germain with a letter from her, asking what Queen Anne had heard from England.

The siege was not so strait but that unsuspected

persons could get in and out, but after all, the poor Queen's anxiety and suspense were such that Lord Jermyn was forced to disclose the truth to her before Sir Andrew came back with the letters. She stood like a statue, and could neither move nor speak till night, when the Duchess of Vendôme came and caressed her until at last the tears broke forth, and she sobbed and wept piteously all night. The next day she retired into the Carmelite convent in the Faubourg St. Jaques, taking my mother with her. As, according to French fashion, I was not to be left to keep house myself, my mother invited Sir Francis and Lady Ommaney to come and take charge of me, and a very good thing it was, for we at least had food enough, and my dear good friends had very little.

We were all stunned by the dreadful news from England. It was very sad to see old Sir Francis, who had borne without complaint the loss of land, honours, and home, nay, who had stood by to see his only son die at Naseby, sitting like one crushed, and only able to mutter now and then: "My Master, my good Master." You might know an English exile in those days by the mourning scarf and sad countenance. I remember a poor wild cavalier whom my mother and Meg never liked to admit when Eustace was not at home, going down on his knees to Lady Ommaney for a bit of black silk, when he looked as if he was starving.

We could not, of course, have evening receptions for our poor hungry countrymen in the absence of my mother, and with such sorrow upon us all, but Lady Ommaney and I did contrive pies and pasties, and all sorts of food that could be sent as gifts without offence to the families we thought most straitened.

The poor of Paris itself were not so very ill-off, for there were continual distributions of money and flour to keep them in good humour, and there were songs about

“Le bon tems que c’était
A Paris durant la famine,
Tout le monde s’entrebaisait
A Paris durant la famine,
La plus belle se contentait
D’un simple boisseau de farine.”

La plus belle was the Duchess of Longueville, who tried hard to persuade the people that she was one with them. Her second son had been born only a few days after her expedition to the Hôtel de Ville, and she asked the City of Paris to stand godmother to him in the person of the provosts and *échevins*. Afterwards she had a great reception, which Clément Darpent attended, and he told us the next morning that it had been the most wonderful mixture of black gowns and cassocks, with blue scarfs and sword-knots, lawyers, ladies, warriors, and priests.

He continued to bring us tidings every day, and Sir

Francis and Lady Ommaney really liked him, and said he was worthy to be an Englishman.

His father remained very ill, and day by day he told of the poor old man's pain and shortness of breath. Now Lady Ommaney had great skill in medicine, indeed there were those who said she had done the work of three surgeons in the war; and she had been of great service to my dear brother, Lord Walwyn, when he first came to Paris. She thought little or nothing of the French doctors, and waxed eloquent in describing to Clément Darpent how she would make a poultice of bran or of linseed. Now he had learned of my brother to read English easily, and to converse in it on all great matters of state and policy, but the household terms and idioms were still far beyond him, and dear good Lady Ommaney had never learned more French than enabled her to say "*Combien*" when she made a purchase. Or if they had understood one another's tongue, I doubt me if any one could have learned the compounding of a poultice through a third person, and that a man!

So, while I was labouring to interpret, Lady Ommaney exclaimed, "But why should I not come and show your mother?"

"Ah! if you would, Madame, that would verily be goodness," returned Clément in his best English.

Well, I knew Eustace and Meg would have called me self-willed, when my mother had once made such a noise

about our taking shelter from Broussel's mob at the Maison Darpent; but this was a mere visit of charity and necessity, for it was quite certain that the two good ladies could never have understood one another without me to interpret for them. Moreover, when Clément Darpent had rescued my sister from the mob, and was always watching to protect us, we surely owed him some return of gratitude, and it would have been mere cruelty in me to have stayed away because they were bourgeois.

So I went with Lady Ommaney, and was refreshed by the sight of that calm face of Madame Darpent, which she always seemed to me to have borrowed from the angels, and which only grew the sweeter and more exalted the greater was her trouble, as if she imbibed more and more of heavenly grace in proportion to her needs.

We did our best, Lady Ommaney and I, to show and explain, but I do not think it was to much purpose. The materials were not like our English ones, and though mother and son were both full of thanks and gratitude, Madame Darpent was clearly not half convinced that what was good for an Englishman was good for a Frenchman, and even if she had been more fully persuaded, I do not think her husband would have endured any foreign treatment.

When we took leave she said, "*Permettez moi, ma chère demoiselle,*" and would have kissed my hand, but I threw my arms round her neck and embraced her, for

there was something in her face that won my heart more than it had ever gone out to any woman I ever saw; and I saw by Lady Ommaney's whole face and gesture that she thought a great sorrow was coming on the good woman. I believe she was rather shocked, for she was a Huguenot by birth, and a Jansenist by conviction, and thus she did not approve of any strong signs of affection and emotion; but nevertheless she was touched and very kind and good, and she returned my embrace by giving me her sweet and solemn blessing.

And as he put me into the carriage, Clément, that foolish Clément, must needs thank me, with tears in his eyes, for my goodness to her.

"What do you mean, sir," said I, "by thanking me for what I delight in and value as a daughter?"

Whereupon I, equally foolish, knew what I had said, and felt my face and neck grow crimson all over, and what must he do, but kiss my hand in a rapture.

And all the way home I could hear old Lady Ommaney murmuring to herself, quite unconscious that she was speaking aloud, "My stars! I hope I have not done wrong! What will my Lady Walwyn say? Not that he would be altogether a bad match for her after our notions. Her father was only a baron, and theirs is a good old family of the citizen sort, but then my Lady Walwyn is a Frenchwoman, and thinks all that is not noble the dirt under her feet."

My heart gave a great bound, and then seemed to swell and take away my breath, so that I could not at first speak to stop those uttered thoughts, which made me presently feel as if I were prying into a letter, so as soon as I could get my voice I said, as well as I could, "My Lady, I hear you."

"Hear me! Bless me, was I talking to myself? I only was thinking that the poor old gentleman there is not long for this world. But maybe your mother would not call him a gentleman. Ha! What have they got written up there about the Cardinal?"

I read her the placard, and let her lead me away from the subject. I could not talk about it to any one, and how I longed for Eustace!

However, I believe terror was what most ailed the old gentleman (not that the French would call him so). He must always have been chicken-hearted, for he had changed his religion out of fear. His wife was all sincerity, but the dear good woman was religious for both of them!

And as time went on his alarms could not but increase. The Parliament really might have prevailed if it had had any constancy, for all the provincial Parliaments were quite ready to take part with it, and moreover the Duke of Bouillon had brought over his brother, the Vicomte de Turenne, to refuse to lead his army against them, or to keep back the Spaniards. The Queen-Regent

might really have been driven to dismiss the Cardinal and repeal the taxes if the city had held out a little longer, but in the midst the First President Molé was seized with patriotic scruples. He would not owe his success to the foreign enemies of his country, and the desertion of the army, and he led with him most of his compeers. I suppose he was right—I know Clément thought so—but the populace were sorely disappointed when negotiations were opened with the Queen and Court, and it became evident that the city was to submit without any gain but some relaxation of the tax.

The deputies went and came, and were well mobbed everywhere. The Coadjutor and Duke of Beaufort barely restrained the populace from flying at the throat of the First President, who they fancied had been bribed to give them up. One wretch on the steps of the Palais de Justice threatened to kill the fine old man, who calmly replied, "Well, friend, when I am dead I shall want nothing but six feet of earth."

The man fell back, daunted by his quietness, and by the majesty of his appearance in his full scarlet robes. These alarms, the continual shouting in the streets, and the growing terror lest on the arrival of the Court all the prominent magistrates should be arrested and sent to the Bastille, infinitely aggravated President Darpent's disorder. We no longer saw his son every day, for he was wholly absorbed in watching by the sick-bed, and besides

there was no further need, as he averred, of his watching over us. However, Sir Francis went daily to inquire at the house, and almost always saw Clément, who could by this time speak English enough to make himself quite intelligible, but who could only say that, in spite of constantly being let blood, the poor old man grew weaker and weaker; and on the very day the treaty was signed he was to receive the last rites of the Church.



CHAPTER II.

CONDOLENCE.

(By Margaret.)

OUR siege was over at last. I can hardly explain how or why, for there was no real settlement of the points at issue. I have since come to understand that the Queen and the Cardinal were alarmed lest the Vicomte de Turenne with his army should come to the assistance of his brother, the Duke of Bouillon, and thus leave the frontier open to the Spaniards; and that this very possibility also worked upon the First President Molé, who was too true a Frenchman not to prefer giving way to the Queen to bringing disunion into the army and admitting the invader. Most of the provincial Parliaments were of the same mind as that of Paris, and if all had united and stood firm the Court would have been reduced to great straits. It was well for us at St. Germain that they never guessed at our discomforts on our hill, and how impossible it would have been to hold out for a more complete victory.

I was glad enough to leave St. Germain the day after the terms had been agreed upon. The royal family did not yet move, but my term of waiting had long been expired; I burned to rejoin my mother and sister, and likewise to escape from the assiduities of M. de Lamont, who was becoming more insufferable than ever.

So I asked permission of the Queen to let my son resume his studies, and of Mademoiselle to leave her for the time. Both were gracious, though the Queen told me I was going into a wasps' nest; while, on the other hand, Mademoiselle congratulated me on returning to those dear Parisians, and said she should not be long behind me. I was too much afraid of being hindered not to set out immediately after having received my license, so as to take advantage of the escort of some of the deputies with whom I had a slight acquaintance. I also hoped to avoid M. de Lamont's leave-takings, but I was not fortunate enough to do this. The absurd man, learning that I was on the point of departure, came rushing headlong into the court where the carriages stood, having first disordered his hair and untied his scarf, so as to give himself a distracted appearance, and thus he threw himself on his knees between me and the coach door, declaring that I was killing him and breaking his heart by my cruelty.

I was very angry, and afraid of showing any excite-

ment, lest it should give him any advantage, so I only drew up my head coldly and said :

“Let me pass, sir.” But that only made him throw himself on the ground as if he would kiss my robe, whereupon Gaspard, with his hand on his little sword, said : “Why don’t you give him a good kick, mamma ?” This made everybody laugh ; and I said, still keeping my head stiff : “We will go round to the other door, my son, since there is this obstruction in our way.”

This we did before he could follow us ; and the last I saw of M. de Lamont as I quitted St. Germain, he was still kneeling in the court, in the attitude of an Orlando Furioso, reaching out his arms towards the departing carriage. I did not pity him, for I did not for a moment believe his passion a serious one, and I thought his wife would not be much happier than my poor little sister-in-law, about whom I was very anxious, and as to these extravagances, they were the ordinary custom of those who professed to be lovers. He was one of the equerries-in-waiting on the Duchess of Orleans, and thus happily could not follow ; and I never rejoiced more than when Gaspard and I, with my two women, had turned our backs on St. Germain and began to descend through the scattered trees of the forest towards Paris.

No less than forty carriages came out to meet the deputies on their return, and our progress was very slow, but at last we found ourselves at our hotel, where we

were entirely unexpected, and the porter was so much surprised that, instead of announcing us properly, he rushed into the courtyard, screaming out: "Madame! Monsieur le Marquis!" The whole household came rushing down the steps pell-mell, so that it was plain at the first glance that my mother was not there. Annora was the first to throw herself into my arms, with a shriek and sob of joy, which gave me a pleasure I cannot describe when I contrasted this meeting with our former one, for now again I felt that we were wholly sisters.

Gaspard sprang to the Abbé's neck, and declared himself tired of his holidays, and quite ready to resume his studies. They would be much pleasanter than running after the King and Duke of Anjou, and bearing the blame of all their pranks. My mother, I heard, was at the Convent of St. Jaques with her poor bereaved Queen, and she had left my sister in the charge of Sir Francis and Lady Ommaney.

The old lady came to welcome me; Sir Francis was out, gone to inquire for the President Darpent; and before I had been an hour in the house, I found how entirely different a world it was from that which I had left, and how changed were the interests that absorbed it. Of my poor little Cécile scarcely anything was known. Annora had only seen her once or twice, and even the poor English Queen was second in interest to the illness of M. Darpent, and the fatigues of his wife in nursing him.

It seemed to me as if Lady Ommaney and my sister discussed, as if he had been their near relation, every symptom of him, who, in the eyes of all my recent companions, was nothing better than an old *Frondeur*, a rebel richly deserving to be put to death.

If Lady Ommaney had understood French, I really believe she would have gone to help Madame Darpent, who had now been sitting up for several nights; and though her son was most dutiful, and shared her vigils, taking every imaginable care of his father, he could not relieve her materially. The old man died the morning after my return home, and Sir Francis, who had been to inquire, reported that the funeral was to take place the next night by Madame's desire, as she was resolved that it should not be made an occasion for the meeting of seditious persons, who might take the opportunity of inveighing against the Government as the remote cause of his death.

The city was, in fact, in a very unquiet state; nevertheless, Queen Henrietta returned to her apartments at the Louvre, and my mother came back to us, though when she found me at home, she only remained for one night. The Queen wanted her, and it was not convenient, in the condition of things, to be carried about in a sedan chair. Moreover I had a visit from my sister-in-law; I was astonished at her venturing out, but though very thin, she looked radiant, for her husband had come into Paris

in the train of the Princes, and had actually passed half an hour with her! I was less gratified when I found what he had come for. It was to desire his wife to come to me and inform me that it was the will and pleasure of the Prince of Condé that I should accept the addresses of the Baron de Lamont.

"Thank you, sister," I said, smiling a little, for I knew it was of no use to scold her or argue with her, and I would have spoken of something else, but she held my hand and entreated:

"You will, then?"

"Oh, you have been charged to throw your influence into the scale," I said, laughing; and the poor thing had to confess that he had said to her, with an air so noble, so amiable, that here was an opportunity of being of some real use to him if she would persuade Madame de Bellaise to marry M. de Lamont.

"To him!" I might well exclaim.

"Well, you see," Cécile explained, "M. le Prince said to him: 'The Bellaise is your sister-in-law, is she not? It is for you to overcome her ridiculous scruples and make her accept Lamont, who is desperately in love with her, and whose fortune needs to be repaired.'"

"I see," I replied; "but I cannot carry my complaisance so far."

"But," faltered Cécile, "he is very handsome and very distinguished——"

"Come, Cécile, you have done your duty. That is enough."

But the poor little thing thought herself bound still to persuade me with the arguments put into her mouth, till I asked her whether she could wish me to forget her brother, or if in my place she would do such a thing as give a father like M. de Lamont to her children. Then she began to weep, and asked me to forgive her, ending in her simplicity with :

"The Prince would have been pleased with my husband, and perhaps he would have borne me good will for it!"

"Ah, Cécile!" I said, embracing her; "I would do much for you, but you must not ask me to do this."

The next question was about a visit of condolence to be paid to Madame Darpent. We still kept the Omma-neys with us, on the pretext that the presence of a gentleman gave a sense of security in the condition of the city, but chiefly because we feared that they would be half-starved in their lodgings.

Sir Francis told us that Madame Darpent was, "after your French fashion," as he said, receiving visits of condolence in her bed, and, considering how good and obliging the young man had been, he supposed we should pay one. Annora's eyes shone, but to my surprise she said nothing, and I was quite ready to consent, since I too felt under such obligations to the younger Darpent that I could let no scruple about condescension stand in my way, and I

was glad that my mother could not hear of it until after it was done.

Lady Ommaney, however, looked rather odd and mysterious. She came to my room and told me that she thought I ought to know, though she had no opportunity of telling my mother, that she could not but believe that she had observed a growing inclination between Mistress Annora and the young Monsieur Darpent. I suppose my countenance showed a certain dismay, for she explained that it might be only an old woman's fancy ; but knowing what were our French notions as to nobility and rank, and how we treated all honest gentry without titles like the dirt under our feet, she thought we ought to be warned. Though for her part, if the young gentleman were not a Papist and a Frenchman, she did not see that Mistress Nan could do much better even if we were in England. Then she began giving me instances of barons' daughters marrying gentlemen learned in the law ; and I listened with dismay, for I knew that these would serve to make my sister more determined, if it were really true that any such passion were dawning. I saw that to her English breeding it would not seem so unworthy as it would to us, but to my mother it would be shocking, and I could not tell how my brother would look on it. The only recommendation in my eyes would be the very contrary in his, namely, that she might be led to embrace our religion ; but then I thought Clément Darpent so doubtful

a Catholic that she would be more likely to lead him away. My confidence was chiefly in his *bourgeois* pride, which was not likely to suffer him to pay his addresses where they would be disdained by the family, and in his scrupulous good faith, which would certainly prevent his taking advantage of the absence of the maiden's mother and brother.

However, I knew my sister well enough to be aware that to contradict her was the surest mode of making her resolute, and I thought it wiser that there should be no appearance of neglect or ingratitude to rouse her on behalf of the Darpents. So I agreed with Lady Ommaney that we would seem to take no notice, but only be upon our guard. We did not propose Annora's accompanying us on our visit of condolence, but she was prepared when the carriage came round, and we made our way, falling into a long line of plain but well-appointed equipages of the ladies of the robe, who were all come on the same errand, and we were marshalled into the house and up the stairs by lackeys in mourning.

At the top of the great staircase, receiving everybody, stood Clément Darpent, looking rather pale, and his advocate's black dress decorated with heavy weepers of crape. When he saw us his face lighted up, and he came down to the landing to meet us, an attention of course due to our rank; but it was scarcely the honour done to the family that made his voice so fervent in his exclamation,

“ Ah ! this is true goodness,” though it was only addressed to me, and of course it was my hand that he held as he conducted us upstairs, and to the great chamber where his mother sat up in her bed, not, as you may imagine, in the cloud of lace and cambric which had coquettishly shrouded the widowhood of poor little Madame de Châtillon. All was plain and severe, though scrupulously neat. There was not an ornament in the room, only a crucifix and a holy-water stoup by the side of the bed, and a priest standing by, of the grave and severe aspect which distinguished those connected with Port Royal aux Champs. Madame Darpent’s face looked white and shrunken, but there was a beautiful peace and calmness on it, as if she dwelt in a region far above and beyond the trifling world around her, and only submitted, like one in a dream, to these outward formalities. I felt quite ashamed to disturb her with my dull commonplace compliment of condolence, and I do not think she in the least saw or knew who we were as her lips moved in the formula of thanks. Then Clément led us away in the stream to the buffet, where was the cake and wine of which it was etiquette for every one to partake, though we only drank out of clear glass, not out of silver, as when the mourners are noble. Monsieur Verdon and some familiars of the house, whether friends or relations I do not know, were attending to this, and there was a hum of conversation around ; but there was no acquaintance of ours present, and nobody

ventured to speak to us, except that Clément said: "She will be gratified, when she has time to understand." And then he asked whether I had heard anything of my brother.

As the streets were tolerably clear, I thought we had better drive at once to the Louvre, to see my poor god-mother Queen and my mother.

Certainly it was a contrast. Queen Henrietta had been in agonies of grief at first, and I believe no day passed without her weeping for her husband. Her eyes were red, and she looked ill; but she was quite as ready as ever to take interest in things around her; and she, as only English were present, made me come and sit on a stool at her feet and describe all the straits we had endured at St. Germain, laughing her clear ringing laugh at the notion of her solemn, punctilious Spanish sister-in-law living, as she said, *en bergère* in the middle of the winter, and especially amusing herself over her niece Mademoiselle's little fiction that her equipage had secured respect.

"That young Darpent is a useful and honest man," she said. "It is well if your *beaux yeux* have secured him as a protector in these times, my goddaughter."

"It is for my brother's sake that he has been our friend," I said stiffly, and my mother added that he had been engaged in our cause in the Ribaumont suit, as if that naturally bound him to our service, while the indignant colour flushed into Annora's cheek at thus

dispensing with gratitude. However, we were soon interrupted, for now that the way into the city was opened, and the widowed Queen had left her first solitude, every one was coming to pay their respects to her; and the first we saw arrive was Mademoiselle, who had no sooner exchanged her compliments with her royal aunt, than, profiting by another arrival, she drew me into a window and began: "But, my good Gildippe, this is serious. You have left a distracted lover, and he is moving heaven and earth to gain you. Have you considered? You would gain a position. He has great influence with M. le Prince, who can do anything here."

"Ah, Mademoiselle! Your Royal Highness too!" was all I could say, but I could not silence her. M. de Lamont had interested the Prince of Condé in his cause, and Mademoiselle, with her insane idea of marrying the hero, in case the poor young Princess should die (and some people declared that she was in a decline), would have thought me a small sacrifice to please him. So I was beset on all sides. I think the man was really enough in love to affect to be distracted. Though far less good-looking in my early youth than my sister, I was so tall and blonde as to have a distinguished air, and my indifference piqued my admirer into a resolution to conquer me.

Mademoiselle harangued me on the absurdity of affecting to be a disconsolate widow, on the step in rank that

I should obtain, and the antiquity of M. de Lamont's pedigree, also upon all the ladies of antiquity she could recollect who had married again; and when I called Artemisia and Cornelia to the front in my defence, she betrayed her secret, like poor Cécile, and declared that it was very obstinate and disobedient in me not to consent to do what would recommend *her* to the Prince.

Next came M. d'Aubépine, poor young man, with the air of reckless dissipation that sat so ill on a face still so youthful, and a still more ridiculous affectation of worldly wisdom. He tried to argue me into it by assuring me that the Prince would henceforth be all-powerful in France, and that M. de Lamont was his *protégé*, and that I was not consulting my own interest, those of my son, or of my family, by my refusal. When he found this ineffectual, he assured me peremptorily that it was the Prince's will, to which I replied, "That may be, Monsieur, but it is not mine," to which he replied that I was mad, but that I should repent it. I said M. le Prince was not King of France, and I trusted that he never would be, so that I did not see why I should be bound to obey his will and pleasure. At which he looked so much as if I were uttering blasphemy that I could not help laughing. I really believe, poor fellow, that M. le Prince was more than a king to him, the god of his idolatry, and that all his faults might be traced to his blind worship and imitation.

I was not even exempt from the persuasions or commands of the great man himself, who was at that time dominating the councils of France, and who apparently could not endure that one poor woman should resist him. But he, being a Bourbon and a great captain to boot, set about the thing with a better grace than did the rest. It was in this manner. When peace, such as it was, was agreed upon, the Princes came into Paris, and of course they came to pay their visit of ceremony to Queen Henrietta. It was when I happened to be present, and before leaving her apartment, the Prince came to me, and bending his curled head and eagle face, said, with a look and gesture clearly unaccustomed to opposition: "Madame, I understand that you persist in cruelty to my friend, M. de Lamont. Permit me to beg of you to reconsider your decision. On the word of a Prince, you will not have reason to repent. He is under my protection."

I thanked His Highness for his condescension, but I assured him that I had made up my mind not to marry again.

This made him frown, and his face, always harsh, and only redeemed from ugliness by the fire of his eyes, became almost frightful, so that it might have terrified a weak person into yielding; but of course all he could then do was to make a sign to M. de Lamont to approach, present him to me, and say, "I have requested Madame to reconsider her decision," with which he bowed and left us *tête-à-tête* in the throng.

Then I tried to cut short M. de Lamont's transports by telling him that he must not take the Prince's requesting as the same thing as my doing it. Moreover, I did what my mother said was brutal and unbecoming; I informed him that he was mistaken if he thought he should obtain any claim over my son's estate, for I had nothing but my husband's portion, and there were other guardians besides myself, who would not suffer a stranger to have any share in the administration. Therewith he vehemently exclaimed that I did him injustice, but I still believe that his intention was, if his Prince had remained all-powerful, to get the disposition of my son's property thrown into his hands. My brother Solivet was away with the army, Eustace in Holland, whence I longed to recall him.

Meantime, Sir Francis Ommaney had become intimate with the Darpents, and so too had our good Abbé Bouchamp, who had assisted at the funeral ceremonies, and from whom the widow derived much consolation. From them we heard that she would fain have retired into the convent at Port Royal, only she would not leave her son. There were those who held that it was her duty not to let him stand between her and a vocation, especially as he was full grown, and already in the world; but she retained enough of her old training among the Huguenots to make her insist that since God had given her children, it was plain that He meant her to serve Him through her duty to

them, and that if, through her desertion of him, Clément were tempted to any evil courses, she should never forgive herself. And our Abbé was the more inclined to encourage her in this resolve that he did not love the Jansenists, and had a mind sufficiently imbued with theology to understand their errors.

Certainly Clément showed no inclination to evil courses. In fact, he was so grave and studious that his mother cherished the hope of taking him with her to Port Royal to become one of the solitaries who transformed the desert into a garden. She said that with patience she should see him come to this, but in the meantime youth was sanguine, and he had not renounced the hope of transforming the world. I think she also foresaw that the unavowed love for Annora could scarcely lead to anything but disappointment, and she thought that, in the rebound, he would be willing to devote himself as one of those hermits.

He was certainly acting in a manner to astonish the world. He was not yet of sufficient age or standing to succeed to his father's chair as the President of one of the Chambers of the Parliament, but his promotion as one of the *gens du roi* (crown lawyers) had been secured by annual fees almost ever since he was born, and the robe of the Counsellor who was promoted to the Presidency in the elder Darpent's room was awaiting him, when he "declared his intention of accepting nothing

that had been bought for him, but of continuing a simple advocate, and only obtaining what he could earn by his merits, not what was purchased. To this no doubt the feelings imbibed from my brother and sister had brought him. The younger men, and all the party who were still secret *frondeurs*, applauded him loudly, and he was quietly approved by the Chief President Molé, who had still hopes that the domineering of the Prince of Condé and the unpopularity of Cardinal Mazarin would lead to changes in which ardent and self-devoted souls, like Clément's, could come to the front and bring about improvements. The Coadjutor de Gondy, who was bent on making himself the head of a party, likewise displayed much admiration for one so disinterested, but I am afraid it was full of satire; and most people spoke of young Darpent as a fool, or else as a dangerous character.

And it might very possibly be that if he fell under suspicion, his solitude might not be that of Port Royal but of the Bastille. Yet I am not sure that his mother did not dread the patronage of the Coadjutor most of all.



CHAPTER III.

ST. MARGARET AND THE DRAGON.

I WAS day after day worried and harassed by my suitor, so that I was very glad when, in the autumn, Madame de Rambouillet invited my sister and me to come and pass a few days with her, and see her vintage. We left my son under the care of the Abbé and of Sir Francis and Lady Ommaney, and set forth together in our coach with my women, and, as usual, mounted servants enough to guard us from any of the thieves or straggling soldiers who infested the roads.

For about a league all went well and quietly, but just at the cross-road leading to Chevreuse, a troop of horsemen sprang out upon us. There was a clashing of swords, a pistol-shot or two; I found myself torn from the arms in which my sister was trying to hold me fast, dragged out in spite of all our resistance, and carried into another carriage, at the door of which I was received by two strong arms; a handkerchief was thrown over my mouth to stop my screams, and though the inside of the

coach was already darkened, my hands were tied and my eyes blinded as I was placed on the seat far in the corner; the door banged fast, and we drove swiftly away.

At first I was exhausted with my struggles, and in an agony of suffocation with the gag, which hindered me from getting my breath. I fancy I must have made some sound which showed my captors that unless they relieved me, I should perish in their hands. So the handkerchief was removed, and while I was panting, a voice said:

"It shall not be put on again, if Madame will give her word not to cry out."

"It is of no use at present," I gasped out, and they let me alone. I thought I knew the voice, but I felt spent, bruised, and battered. I knew that threats and entreaties could avail me little in the existing circumstances, and I thought it wiser to rally my forces for the struggle that no doubt was impending; so I sat as still as I could, and was rewarded by finding my hands unbound, when I tried to raise one to my face, and again the voice said:

"Believe us, Madame, you are with friends who would not hurt you for the universe."

I made no answer. Perhaps it was in the same mood in which, when I was a child at home and was in a bad temper, I might be whipped and shut up in a dark room, but nothing would make me speak. Only now I

said my prayers, and I am sure I never did so in those old days. We went on and on, and I think I must have dozed at last, for I actually thought myself wearied out with kicking, scratching, and screaming on the floor of the lumber-room at Walwyn, and that I heard the dear grandmother's voice saying :

"Eh ! *quoi* ! she is asleep ; the sullen demon has left her, the poor child !"

I awoke and found that the coach had stopped, and with the words, "Pardon me, Madame," I was lifted out, and set upon my feet ; but my two hands were taken, and I was led along what seemed to be endless passages, until at length my hands were released, and the same voice said :

"Madame will be glad of a few moments to arrange her dress. She will find the bandage over her eyes easy to remove."

Before, however, I could pull it away, my enemy had shut the door from the outside, and I heard the key turn in it. I looked about me ; I was in a narrow paved chamber, with one small window very high up, through which the sunbeams came, chequered by a tall tree, so high that I knew it was late in the day, and that we must have driven far. There was the frame of a narrow bedstead in one corner, a straw chair, a crucifix, and an empty holy-water stoup, from which I supposed it to be an empty cell in a deserted convent ; but there was a

stone table projecting from the wall, on which had been placed a few toilette necessities, and a pitcher of water stood on the floor.

I was glad to drink a long draught, and then, as I saw there was no exit, I could not but make myself more fit to be seen, for my hair had been pulled down and hung on my shoulders, and my face—ah! it had never looked anything like that, save on the one day when Eustace and I had the great battle, and our grandmother punished us both by bread and water for a week.

After I had made myself look a little more like a respectable widow, I knelt down before the crucifix to implore that I might be defended, and not be wanting to my son or myself. I had scarcely done so, however, when the door was opened, and as I rose to my feet I beheld my brother-in-law, d'Aubépine.

"Armand, brother," I cried joyfully, "are you come to my rescue? Did you meet my sister?"

For I really thought she had sent him, and I readily placed my hand in his as he said: "It depends only on yourself to be free." Even then I did not take alarm, till I found myself in a little bare dilapidated chapel, but with the altar hastily decked, a priest before it in his stole, whom I knew for the Abbé de St. Leu, one of the dissipated young clergy about Court, a familiar of the Condé clique, and, prepared to receive me, Monsieur de

Lamont, in a satin suit, lace collar and cuffs, and deep lace round his boots.

I wrenched my hand from M. d'Aubépine, and would have gone back, but three or four of the soldiers came between me and the door. They were dragoons of the Condé regiment; I knew their uniform. Then I turned round and reproached d'Aubépine with his wicked treachery to the memory of the man he had once loved.

Alas! this moved him no longer. He swore fiercely that this should not be hurled at his head again, and throughout the scene, he was worse to me than even M. de Lamont, working himself into a rage in order to prevent himself from being either shamed or touched.

They acted by the will and consent of the Prince, they told me, and it was of no use to resist it. The Abbé, whom I hated most of all, for he had a loathsome face, took out a billet, and showed it to me. I clearly read in the large straggling characters—"You are welcome to a corporal's party, if you can by no other means reduce the pride of the little droll.—L. DE B."

"Your Prince should be ashamed of himself," I said. "I shall take care to publish his infamy as well as yours."

The gentlemen laughed, the Abbé the loudest, and told me I was quite welcome; such victories were esteemed honourable.

"Yes," I said, "for a short time, among cowards and rogues."

Armand howled at the word cowards.

"Cowards, yes," I said, "who must needs get a company of soldiers to overcome one woman."

I saw a good long scratch on Lamont's face just then, and I flattered myself that it was due to Nan's nails. They all beset me, Lamont at my feet, pleading the force of his passion, entreating with all the exaggeration of the current language; the Abbé arguing about the splendid position I should secure for my son and myself, and the way I should be overthrown if I held out against the Prince; d'Aubépine raging and threatening. I had lost myself already, by my absence and goings on, the estate; the Prince had but to speak the word, and I should be in the Bastille.

"Let him," I said.

"It is of no use to dally with her," cried Armand. "I will hold her while the rite is performed."

I looked at him. I was quite as tall as he, and, I believe, quite as strong; at any rate he quailed, and called out:

"Have you any spirit, Lamont? Here, one of you fellows, come and help to hold her."

"At your peril!" I said. "Gentlemen, I am the widow of your brave officer, Captain de Bellaise, killed at Freiburg. Will you see this wrong done?"

"I command you, as your officer—forward!" he said; and though one wavered, the others stepped forward.

Then I saw there was only one thing to do. A big stone image stood near me. Before they could touch me I had fallen on my knees, and wound my arms so closely round it that they could not unloose them without absolute violence and injury. I knew that in such a position it was impossible even to go through the semblance of marrying me. I felt Armand's hand and the Abbé's try to untwist my arms and unclasp my hands, but they could not prevail against that grip with which I held, and I spoke not one word.

At last they drew back, and I heard them say one to the other: "It is of no use. She must yield in time. Leave her."

I heard them all clank out with their spurs, and lock the door, and then I looked up. There was no other way out of the little convent chapel, which looked as if it had been unused for years, except perhaps for an annual mass, but the altar had been dressed in preparation for the sacrilege that was intended. Then I turned to the figure to which I had clung, and I was encouraged by seeing that it bore the emblems of St. Margaret, my own patroness. I knew very well that my brother and sister would shake their heads, and say it was a superstitious fancy, if they called it by no harder name; but they did not understand our feelings towards the saints. Still it was not to St. Margaret I turned to help me, but to St. Margaret's Master and mine, when I prayed to be delivered

from the mouth of the dragon, though I did trust that she was entreating for me.

I would not move away from her, I might need to clasp her at any moment ; but I prayed fervently before the altar, where I knelt till I grew faint with weariness ; and then I sat at her feet, and thought over all the possibilities of being rescued. If my sister were free I knew she would leave no stone unturned to deliver me, and that my rescue could be only a matter of time ; but she might also have been seized, and if so——? Anyhow, I was absolutely determined that they should kill me before I consented to become the wife of M. de Lamont, or to give him any right over my son.

After a time the door was cautiously opened, and one of the dragoons came in, having taken off his boots and spurs that he might move more noiselessly.

"Madame," he said, "pardon me. I loved our brave captain ; I know you. You sent me new linen in the hospital. Captain de Bellaise was a brave man."

"And you will see no wrong done to his widow and child, my good friend ?" I cried.

"Ah, Madame, you should command all of us. But we are under orders."

"And that means doing me unmanly violence, unworthy of a brave soldier ! You cannot help me ?"

"If Madame would hear me ! The gentlemen are at

dinner. They may sit long over their wine to give them courage to encounter Madame again. My comrade, Benlôt, is on duty. I might find a messenger to Madame's friends."

Then he told me what I had little guessed, that we had been driven round and round, and were really only in the Faubourg St. Médand, in the Priory of the Benedictines, giving title and revenue to the Abbé St. Leu, which had contained no monks ever since the time of the Huguenots. He could go into Paris and return again before his turn to change guard was likely to come.

Should I send him, or should I thus only lose a protector? He so far reassured me that he said his comrades were, like himself, resolved not to proceed to extremities with the widow of their captain—above all in a chapel. They would take care not to exert all their strength, and if they could, without breach of discipline, they would defend me.

I decided. I knew not where my sister might be searching, or if she might not be likewise a prisoner; so I directed him first to the house of M. Darpent, who was more likely to know what to do than Sir Francis Ommoney. Besides, the Rue des Marmousets, where stood Maison Darpent, was not far off.

I heard a great clock strike four, five, six, seven, eight o'clock, and by and by there was a parley. M. de Lamont opened the door of the chapel, and as I shuddered and kept my arm on my patroness, he implored me to

believe that no injury was intended to me—the queen of his thoughts, or some such nonsense—I might understand that by the presence of my brother-in-law. He only besought me not to hurt my precious health, but to leave the cold chapel for a room that had been prepared for me, and where I should find food.

“No,” I said; “nothing should induce me to leave my protectress.”

At least, then, he conjured me to accept food and wine, if I took it where I was. I hastily considered the matter. There was nothing I dreaded so much as being drugged; and yet, on the other hand, the becoming faint for want of nourishment might be equally dangerous, and I had taken nothing that day except a cup of milk before we set out from home; and it was now a matter of time.

I told him, therefore, that I would accept nothing but a piece of bread and some pure water, if it were brought me where I was.

“Ah, Madame! you insult me by your distrust,” he cried.

“I have no reason to trust you,” I said, with a frigidity that I hoped would take from him all inclination for a nearer connection; but he only smote his forehead as if it had been a drum, and complained of my cruelty and obduracy. “Surely I had been nurtured by tigresses,” he said, quoting the last pastoral comedy he had seen.

He sent M. d'Aubépine to conduct some servant with a tray of various meats and drinks; I took nothing

but some bread and water, my brother-in-law trying to argue with me. This was a mistake on their part, for I was more angry with him than with his friend, in whom there was a certain element of extravagant passion, less contemptible than d'Aubépine's betrayal of Philippe de Bellaise's widow merely out of blind obedience to his Prince. He assured me that resistance was utterly useless, that bets had passed at the Prince's court on the Englishwoman's being subdued by Lamont before midnight, and the Prince himself had staked, I know not how much, against those who believed in my obstinacy. Therefore Armand d'Aubépine, who was flushed with wine, and not in the least able to perceive how contemptible he was, urged me to yield with the best grace I could, since there was no help for it. And so saying he suddenly pinioned both my arms with his own.

No help! Was there no help in Heaven above, or earth below? Was my dragoon on his way?

The doors opened. Again the Abbé entered, and with him Lamont. The men-at-arms took their places at the bottom of the chapel. The Abbé opened his book.

"Brave dragoons!" I cried out; "if there be not a man among you who will stir a hand to save me, bear witness that I, Margaret de Ribeaumont; widow of Philippe de Bellaise, your own officer, protest against this shameful violence. Whatever is here done is null and void, and shall be made known to M. l'Abbé's superiors."

There was a dead pause. Then Lamont whispered something to the priest, who began again. I felt Armand's hold relaxing, and making a sudden struggle, I shook myself free with such force that he staggered back, while I bounded forward and snatched the book from the priest's hand, throwing it on the floor, and then, regaining once more the statue of St. Margaret, I stood grasping her with one arm with desperate energy, while I cried : "*A moi*, soldiers of Freiburg !"

"Drag her away," said d'Aubépine to the men.

"By your leave, my captain," said their sergeant, "except in time of war, it is not permitted to lay hands on any one in sanctuary. It is not within our discipline."

D'Aubépine swore an oath that they would see what their Colonel said to their insubordination ; but the sergeant replied, not without some malice :

"It falls within the province of the reverend Father."

"I command you, then !" shrieked the Abbé, in a fury.

"Nay, Monsieur l'Abbé is not our officer," said the sergeant, saluting with great politeness.

"Madame," cried Lamont, "will you cause these men to be put to death for disobedience to their officer ?"

I scarcely believed him. And yet——

There was a sound at the outside.

"Make haste !" cried d'Aubépine. "Here is the Prince come to see whether he has won his wager."

CHAPTER IV.

ST. MARGARET AND THE DRAGON.

(By Annora.)

A FINE country to live in was *la belle France*, where a godly, modest, discreet, and well-living widow could be spirited away by main force from her sister, and her servants, on the King's highway in broad daylight, and by soldiers wearing the King's own uniform ! " In the name of the Prince !" said they. Verily, I think it was in the name of the Prince of darkness. They tore poor Meg from me, though we both fought and struggled as hard as we could, in hopes of some one coming to our rescue. Luckily my gloves were off, and I think I gave a few tolerable scratches to somebody's face, in spite of his abominable *cache-nez*. If the servants had had a tenth part of the valour of our poor fellows who lie dead at Newbury and Alresford we could have brought her off ; but these were but Frenchmen, and were overawed by those dragoons, or dragons, in their cuirasses.

When poor Meg was dragged out, I held her fast,

and tumbled out with her; but even as we fell, she was rent from me, and I think I must have been half stunned. At any rate, I found myself flung back into our own carriage, and the door shut upon me, while the horses were turned round, and we were made to gallop back by the road we had come.

Our women, screaming and crying like mad things, helped me up from the bottom of the carriage. I bade them hold their tongues and stop the horses. The one they could not do, the other they would not. So I was forced to open the door myself, and shout to the coachman to stop that instant. He would not at first, but happily, I saw a pistol, which one of the wretches had dropped in the scuffle, and I threatened him with it. Then, when my voice could be heard, I ordered the two outriders to gallop after the coach in which my sister had been carried off, and see where she was taken, while we made as much speed as we could after them; but the cowardly rogues absolutely began to cry, and say that the leader of the party had turned the horses' heads, and declared that he would shoot any one dead who attempted to follow.

Luckily I was in a close-fitting black cloth suit, being still in mourning for our blessed martyr, and intending to make my toilette at Rambouillet. I bade one of the fellows who had dismounted to give me his cloak, and while they were still staring at me, I sprang into the

saddle, arranged the cloak, and rode off in pursuit. I knew I could keep my seat even on a man's saddle, for cavaliers' daughters had had to do strange things, and it was thus that I was obliged to come away from my dear Berenger's side. But then I rode between my father and Eustace. Now, if I did not find out where my poor Margaret was gone, who was to deliver her?

The men had heart of grace enough to follow me, more of them, indeed, than I wanted, as of course it was better to go quietly than to have them clattering with me. I told them to keep a little in the rear, and I rode on, trying to see above the hedges the glancing of the helmets of the dragoons. Across some vineyards I once caught sight of something like a carriage and a troop of horse, quite in a different direction from what I expected, and presently, when I came to a cross-road, I saw by the marks in the mud and mire that they must have turned that way. I must follow by such guidance as these supplied, and fortunately there had recently been rain, so that the wheel and hoof marks could be tracked. To my amazement they led through many turns and twists at last towards Paris; but to my dismay, when I came to the paved roads that surround the city, I lost all traces. I knew I was a remarkable figure when we were on the high roads, and so I kept back, making one of the servants inquire at a little *cabaret* on the road whether a carriage, attended by dragoons, had passed that way.

"Yes," they brought me word. "A close carriage, no doubt containing a state prisoner, had been escorted by dragoons on the way to the Bastille."

The man brought me back the answer, weeping. I scolded the fellow well for thinking that these rogues *saying* Madame was at the Bastille made it so, and yet it echoed my own alarm. I had at least ascertained one point. She had not been transported to some solitary castle in the country, but must be near at hand.

I must now go home, and see what help was to be had; but as they would never let me pass the gates of Paris looking as I knew I must look, I was obliged to ride back and meet the carriage, which I had bidden to follow us, and return to it in order to re-enter the city.

My mother was at St. Germain with our own Queen; who would be my resource? I thought I had better first go home and see what Sir Francis Ommaney's counsel would be, and whether he thought the English ambassador, Sir Richard Browne, could give any help, though, unfortunately, poor Meg was no longer an English subject. There was consternation enough when I came in with my terrible news, but at least there was common-sense, and not shrieking. Sir Francis recommended me at once to dress myself to go to St. Germain, while he would repair to the embassy, since Sir Richard was the most likely person to be able to advise him. We also thought of sending a courier to Solivet, who was with the army

on the frontier; and I put on a dress fit to obtain admission at St. Germain. Lady Ommaney was scolding me into taking some food before starting, and crying, because she had a bad attack of rheumatism, and her husband would not let her go with us, when there was a knock, and one of the women ran in: "News, news, Mademoiselle! news of Madame la Vicomtesse! But ah! she is in a sad plight."

Down I ran headlong, and whom should I find but the dear and excellent Madame Darpent. She, who never left her home but for Church, had come to help us in our extremity. It seemed that Meg's dragoon (about whom she has told her own story) had disguised himself as soon as he came within Paris, and come in hot haste to M. Darpent, telling him how once my brave sister had repulsed the whole crew of villains, and how he had hurried away while the gentlemen (pretty gentlemen, indeed!) were drinking wine to get up their courage for another encounter, in which they were determined to succeed since there were heavy bets at the Prince's camp that the pride of *la grande Anglaise* should be subdued before midnight. The dragoon had not ventured to come any farther than Maison Darpent, lest he should be missed and his comrades should not be able to conceal his absence, but he assured M. Darpent that though they might appear to obey orders, they were resolved to give the lady every opportunity of resistance. Was she not the wife

of the best captain they had ever had, and had she not knelt like one of the holy saints in a mystery play?

I was for setting forth at once with Sir Francis, sure that the iniquity could not proceed when it was made public. Of course we would have risked it, but we might not have been able to force our way in without authority, since the vile Abbé was on his own ground, and Madame Darpent told us her son had devised a better plan. He had gone to the Coadjutor, who, in the dotage of his uncle, the Archbishop of Paris, exercised all his powers. As one of their monkish clergy, this same Abbé was not precisely under his jurisdiction, but the celebration of a marriage, and at such an hour, in a Priory Chapel, was an invasion of the privileges of the parish priest, and thus the Bishop of the See had every right to interfere. And this same Coadjutor was sure to have an especial delight in detecting a scandal, and overthrowing a plan of the Prince of Condé and the ruling party at Court, so that if he could be found there was little doubt of his assistance.

In order to lose no time, Clément Darpent had gone instantly in search of him, and his good mother had come at once in her sedan to see if I were returned, relieve our minds about my sister, and if my mother were within reach, prepare her to go in search of Margaret, since the Coadjutor, Bishop though he were, was still young, and not at all the sort of man who could be suffered to bring her home without some elder matron as her escort. Or if my

mother were out of reach, Madame Darpent was prepared, as an act of charity and goodness, to go herself in quest of our poor Meg. The carriage had followed her to the door for the purpose as soon as it could be got ready, and to add to my exceeding gratitude, she was willing to take me with her. Sir Francis insisted on going to my mother. He said it was right, but we doubted whether it would do any good. We waited only for tidings which her son had promised to send, and they came at last in a small billet sent by one of his clerks. The Coadjutor had absolutely fired at the notion of such a hit to the opposite party, and was only getting together what were called the "First of Corinthians," namely, the corps who had belonged to him during the siege, and had obtained the nickname because he was titular Archbishop of Corinth.

Clément would not leave him a moment, lest he should be diverted from his purpose, but sent word to Madame Darpent that she, or whoever was to escort Madame de Bellaise, was to meet him at seven o'clock in the open space by the Barrière, showing a green light through the carriage window, when he would show a red one.

Oh! what might not have happened before we could get there! I thought I was used enough to suspense, I who had heard the rattle of the musketry in more than one battle, but I should have been wild had not that

best of women held my hands and soothed me and helped me to say my prayers.

Hours seemed to go by as we sat in the dark with our lamp behind the green curtain over the window, but at last the trampling of horses was heard and the red light appeared. Presently Clément came to our door, and exchanged a few words, but he said he must return to the Coadjutor, who was in the best humour in the world.

The gates were closed, but the Coadjutor had no difficulty in passing them, and we followed in his train. It was a dark night, but mounted servants carried flambeaux, and we saw the light glance on the Corinthians who guarded us. At last we stopped: We could not see then, but I visited the place afterwards, and saw it was a tall brick house, with a high wall round a courtyard. Here the Coadjutor's carriage drew up, and entrance was demanded for "Monseigneur l'Archêvêque de Corinthe, Coadjuteur de Paris." It may be supposed that the dragoon who kept the door made no difficulty.

The carriage moved on, we drew up, and Clément, who had waited, handed us out saying: "He tells me we are just in time. Be as silent as possible."

We found the court lighted with torches, the Coadjutor's chaplain arranging his purple robe, as he walked on through the doors that were opened for him. Sir Francis led Madame Darpent, Clément gave me his hand, as we followed closely and noiselessly.

The chapel had its great wax candles alight on the altar. We could see in, as we paused in the darkness of the antechapel, outside the screen, while the Coadjutor advanced to the door. My Margaret knelt, clinging closely to a great stone image. The vile coward d'Aubépine was commanding—for we heard him—his soldiers to seize her. The Abbé stood finding the place in his book; Lamont was at a safe distance, however, trying to induce her to rise. The Coadjutor's clear voice was heard.

"Benedicite, Messieurs," he said, and oh! the start they gave! "What holy function am I interrupting, M. l'Abbé? The lady is in the attitude of a penitent, but I was not aware that it was one of the customs of your order to absolve thus in public."

"Monseigneur," said the Abbé, "neither was I aware that episcopal surveillance extended to religious houses."

Margaret here broke in. She had risen to her feet, and looking at the Archbishop, with eyes beaming in her pale face, she cried: "O Monseigneur! you are come to save me! These wicked men are striving to marry me against my will."

"To celebrate the marriage sacrament!" continued the Coadjutor, in his calm, sneering tone; "then M. l'Abbé, I suppose you have procured the necessary permission from the curate of the parish to perform the rite at this strange time and place? I am sorry, Messieurs, to break

up so romantic a plan, savouring of the fine days of the Quatre fils Aymon, but I must stand up for the claims of the diocese and the parish."

M. de Lamont turned round to my sister, and made one of his lowest bows, such as no one but a French courtier *can* make (thank Heaven!).

"Madame," he said, "we are disconcerted, but I shall still put my trust in the truth that beauty ever pardons the efforts of love."

"So it may be, Monsieur," returned Margaret, already fully herself, and looking as tall, white, and dignified among them as a goddess among apes, "so it may be, where there is either beauty or love;" and she made him a most annihilating curtsy. Then turning to the Coadjutor she said: "Monseigneur, I cannot express my obligations to you;" and then as Clément stood behind him, she added: "Ah, Monsieur, I knew I might reckon on you," holding out her hand, English fashion. She did not see us, but M. d'Aubépine, who was slinking off the scene, like a beaten hound, as well he might, unaware that we were in the antechapel, caught his foot and spur in Madame Darpent's long trailing cloak, and came down at full length on the stone floor, being perhaps a little flustered with wine. He lay still for the first moment, and there was an outcry. One of the soldiers cried out to the other as Madame Darpent's black dress and white cap flashed into the light:

"It is the holy saint who has appeared to avenge the sacrilege! She has struck him dead."

And behold the superstition affected even the licentious good-for-nothing Abbé. Down he dropped upon his knees, hiding his eyes, and sobbing out: "Sancta Margarita, spare me, spare me! I vow thee a silver image. I vow to lead a changed life. I was drawn into it, holy Lady Saint. They showed me the Prince's letter."

He got it all out in one breath, while some of them were lifting up d'Aubépine, and the Coadjutor was in convulsions of suppressed laughter, and catching hold of Clément's arm whispered: "No, no, Monsieur, I entreat of you, do not undeceive him. Such a scene is worth anything! Madame, I entreat of you," to Meg, who was stepping forward.

However, of course it could not last long, though as d'Aubépine almost instantly began to swear, as he recovered his senses, Madame Darpent unconsciously maintained the delusion, by saying solemnly in her voice, the gravest and deepest that I ever heard in a Frenchwoman: "Add not another sin, sir, to those with which you have profaned this holy place."

The Abbé thereupon took one look and broke into another tempest of entreaties and vows, which Madame Darpent by this time heard. "M. l'Abbé," she said, "I pray you to be silent; I am no saint, but a friend, if Madame will allow me so to call myself, who has come

to see her to her home. But oh ! Monsieur," she added, with the wonderful dignity that surrounded her, "forget not, I pray you, that what is invisible is the more real, and that the vows and resolution you have addressed to me in error are none the less registered in Heaven."

Mocker as the Coadjutor habitually was, he stood impressed, and uttered no word to mar the effect, simply saying : "Madame, we thank you for the lesson you have given us ! And now, I think, these ladies will be glad to close this painful scene."

Meg, who with Madame Darpent, had satisfied herself that the wretch d'Aubépine had not hurt himself anything like as much as he deserved, declared herself ready and thankful to go away. The Abbé and Lamont both entreated that she would take some refreshment before returning home, but she shuddered, and said she could taste nothing there, and holding tight by my arm, she moved away, though we paused while Madame Darpent was kneeling down and asking the Archbishop to bless her. He did so, and her spirit seemed to have touched his lighter and gayer one, and to have made him feel what he was, for he gave the benediction with real solemnity and unaffected reverence for the old lady.

He himself handed her into the carriage, and he must greatly have respected her, for though he whispered something to her son about the grand deliverance of the victim through St. Margaret and the Dragon (an irresistible pun

on the dragoon), yet, excellent story as could have been made of the free-thinking Abbé on his knees to the old Frondeur's widow, he never did make it public property. I believe that it is quite true, as my sister's clever friend Madame de Sevigné declares, that there was always more good in Cardinal de Retz, as he now is called, than was supposed.

Poor Meg had kept up gallantly through all her terrible struggle of many hours, but when we had her safely in the carriage in the dark, she sank back like one exhausted, and only held my hand and Madame Darpent's to her lips by turns. I wanted to ask whether she felt ill or hurt in any way, but after she had gently answered, "Oh no, only so thankful, so worn out," Madame Darpent advised me not to agitate her by talking to her, but to let her rest. Only the kind, motherly woman wanted to know how long it was since she had eaten, and seeing the light of a little *cabaret* on the road, she stopped the carriage and sent her son to fetch some bread and a cup of wine.

For I should have said that M. Darpent had been obliged to return in the same carriage with us, since he could not accompany the Coadjutor on his way back. He wished to have gone outside, lest his presence should incommode our poor Meg; but it had begun to rain, and we could not consent. Nor was Meg like a Frenchwoman, to want to break out in fits the moment the strain was over.

He brought us out some *galettes*, as they call them, and each of us sisters had a draught of wine, which did us a great deal of good. Then we drove on in the dark as fast as we could, for the Coadjutor's carriage had passed us while we were halting, and we wanted to enter the gates at the same time with him.

I sat beside my sister, holding her hand, as it seemed to give her a sense of safety; Madame Darpent was on her other side, Clément opposite. We kept silence, for Madame Darpent declared that no questions ought to be asked of Madame de Bellaise till the next morning.

Presently we heard an unmistakable snoring from the old lady's corner, and soon after I felt my sister's fingers relax and drop mine, so that I knew she slept. Then I could not but begin to tell, in the quiet and stillness, how my dear brother would thank and bless him for what he had done for us.

I am an old woman now, but I have only to shut my eyes and it all comes back on me—the dark carriage, the raindrops against the window glancing in the light of the flambeaux, the crashing of the wheels, and the steady breathing of the sleepers, while we two softly talked on, and our hearts went out to one another, so that we knew our own feelings for one another. •

I think it came of talking of Eustace and his not being able to keep back, that, though Eustace was in some sort the guiding star of his life, yet what he had done for

us was not merely for my brother's sake, but for another much more unworthy, had he only known it.

Then he found he had betrayed himself, and asked my pardon, declaring that he had only meant to watch me at a distance (poor me), knowing well the vast gulf between our stations. What could I answer but that this was only French nonsense; that we knew better in England what a gentleman meant, and that I was sure that my brother would freely and joyfully give me to him, poor, broken, ruined cavalier exile as I was? And then we got hold of each other's hands, and he called me all sorts of pretty names in French and in English; and I felt myself the proudest and happiest maiden in France, or England to boot, for was not mine the very noblest, most upright, and disinterested of hearts?

Only we agreed that it would be better to let no one at Paris know what was between us until my brother should return. We knew that he would be the most likely person to obtain my mother's consent, and he really stood in the place of a father to me; while if we disclosed it at once there was no knowing what my mother might not attempt in his absence, and his mother would never permit us to be in opposition to mine. She would not understand that, though I might not disobey my mother, it was quite impossible that my feelings and opinions should be guided by one of different religion, nation, and principles altogether.

However, we agreed to write to my brother in Holland as soon as we could find a safe conveyance, and when there were signs of waking on the part of our companions we unlocked the hands that had been clasping one another so tightly.

(Finished by Margaret.)

So you thought I was asleep, did you, Mistress Nan? I suppose after all these years you will not be ready to box my ears for having heard? It was no feigning; I really was so worn and wearied out that I lay back on the cushions they had arranged for me in a sort of *assoupissement*, only at first able to feel that I was safe, and that Annora was with me. She says that I dropped her hand. Well, perhaps I may have dozed for a moment, but it seems to me that I never lost the knowledge of the sound of the wheels, nor of the murmuring voices, though I could not stir, nor move hand nor foot, and though I heard it all, it was not till I was lying in bed the next morning that I recollected any part of it, and then it was more as if I had dreamt it than as a reality.

Moreover, Annora was hovering over me, looking perfectly innocent, and intent on making me rest, and feeding me upon possets, and burning to hear my story. Then came my mother from St. Germain, having received a courier who had been despatched at dawn. She embraced me and wept over me, and yet—and yet I think

there mingled with her feeling something of vexation and annoyance. If I were to be carried off at all by a man of rank and station, it would have been almost better if he had succeeded in marrying me than that the affair should be a mere matter of gossip. Certainly, that my rescue should be owing to one of the factious lawyers, and to that mischievous party leader the Coadjutor, was an unmixed grievance. After all my follies at Nid de Merle, I was quite sufficiently in ill odour with the Court to make it needful to be very careful. If I had only waited till morning, the Queen would have taken care to deliver me without my having given a triumph which the Frondeurs would not fail to make the most of.

“Where should I have been in the morning?” I said. “Did she not know that the horrible wager related to midnight?”

She supposed any woman could take care of herself. At any rate I had contrived to offend everybody. The Prince was paramount at Court, and carried all before him. Mademoiselle, in her devotion to him, would be very angry that I had dared to resist him, and the Queen-Regent would never forgive my trafficking with the Frondeurs. On the whole, my mother really thought that the best way to regain my favour or even toleration, would be to accept M. de Lamont with a good grace, since he was certainly distractedly in love with me, and if I fell into disgrace with the authorities, I might have my

son and the administration of his property taken away from me in a still more distressing manner, whereas it would only depend on myself to rule M. de Lamont.

"I have only to say," observed Annora, "that if she were to do such a thing I should never speak to her again."

Whereupon my mother severely reproved my sister, declaring that it was all her fault, and that she had gone beyond all bounds when left to herself, and would be a disgrace to the family.

Annora coloured furiously, and said she did not know what might be esteemed a disgrace in France, but she should certainly do nothing that would disgrace her English name. Then it flashed on me that what had passed in the carriage had been a reality, and I saw what she meant.

Of course, however, I did not betray my perception. Disputes between my mother and sister were what we all chiefly dreaded; it was so impossible to make them see anything from the same point of view, so I thought it best to turn the conversation back to my own affairs, by saying that I thought that to marry M. de Lamont would only make matters worse, and that no loss of favour or any other misfortune could be equal to that of being bound to such a husband as he had shown himself.

I had them all against me except my sister and my English friends, and my saintly guide, Father Vincent de

Paul, who assured me that I was by no means bound to accept a man like that; and as for silencing scandal, it was much better to live it down. That devout widow, Madame de Miramion, had endured such an abduction as mine at the hands of Bussy Rabutin, and had been rescued by her mother-in-law, who had raised the country-people. No one thought a bit the worse of her for it, and she was one of the foremost in her works of charity.

This gave me the comfort of knowing that I was right, and I knew besides that such a marriage would be a sore grief to my brother, so I resolved to hold out against all persuasions; but it was a wretched time that now began, for Lamont would not desist from persecuting me with his suit, and I had no remission from him either at Court or in my own house, for if I excluded him my mother admitted him. My mother dragged me to Court as a matter of form, but I was unwelcome there, and was plainly shown that it was so.

The Queen could not forgive me for being rescued by the Frondeurs; Mademoiselle was in the Prince's interest; the Prince was dominant, and all his satellites made it a point of honour that none of them should fail in carrying any point. Even Cécile d'Aubépine followed the stream. Her husband was very angry with her, and said I had put on grand airs, and made myself ridiculous; and the foolish little thing not only obeyed but believed him, though he neglected her as much as ever. I never dared

to drive, scarcely ever to walk out, without escort enough to prevent any fresh attempt at abduction; and even my poor Gaspard was in disgrace, because he was not courtier enough to bear in silence taunts about his mother.

I had only one thing to look forward to, and that was the return of my brother. The new King of England had arrived, and we trusted that he would appear with him; but alas! no, he was detained on the King's business in Jersey, and could not come.

Meantime Annora kept her own counsel, and though she was my only supporter, except of course the Ommaneys, in my resistance, the want of confidence made a certain separation between us. I do not think she had any secret communication with Clément Darpent—they were too honourable for that—but she drew more to old Lady Ommaney than to me during this time.

Reports began to circulate that the Prince's insolence had gone too far, and that the Cardinal had been holding secret conferences with the Coadjutor, to see whether his help and that of Paris could be relied on for the overthrow of the Prince. I remember that Annora was in high spirits, and declared that now was the time for honest men if they only knew how to profit by it.

CHAPTER V.

THE LION AND THE MOUSE.

WE were greatly amazed when late one January evening Cécile rushed into my room like one distracted, crying :

“The monsters, they have arrested him !”

We knew there was only one of the nobler sex in the eyes of my poor Cécile, and my first question was :

“What has he done ?” expecting to hear that he had been fighting a duel, or committing some folly. My surprise was the greater when I heard her answer :

“He was going to carry off the Cardinal’s nieces.”

“He seems to have a turn for such exploits,” Annora said. “Who wanted to marry them ?”

“It was for no such thing !” Cécile said, with as much heat as she could show ; “it was to take them as hostages.”

“As hostages !”

“Oh yes ! do not you know ? For the Princes.”

Our astonishment was redoubled.

“*Eh, quoi !* Messieurs les Prince de Condé and

Conty, and the Duke of Longueville, are all arrested, coming from the council, by the treason of the Cardinal. They are sent off no one knows where, but my husband, you understand, was with M. de Boutteville and a hundred other brave officers in the garden of the Hôtel de Condé when the news came. M. de Boutteville immediately proposed to gallop to Val de Grace and then seize on the Demoiselles Mazarin and Mancini as the best means of bringing the Cardinal to reason, and instantly it is done; but the cunning Cardinal had foreseen everything; the young ladies had been removed, and the officers were dispersed, only my hero, the most daring and valiant of them all, has been seized and carried off, I know not where," and she burst into a flood of tears.

With some difficulty we elicited from her that she had learned the tidings from a sergeant who had been in attendance on the Count, and had fled when he was taken. At the same time horrible noises and shouts were heard all over the city.

"Treason! Treason! Down with the Cardinal! Beaufort is taken! The Coadjutor! Vengeance! Vengeance!"

Sir Francis hurried out to learn the truth, and then my mother in her fright cried out:•

"Will no one come and protect us? Oh! where is M. Darpent?" while Annora called to me to take our cloaks and come up to the roof of the house to see what

was going on. She was in high spirits, no doubt laughing within herself to see how every danger made my mother invoke M. Darpent, and finding in a tumult a sure means of meeting him, for she could trust to him to come and offer his protection.

I *saw* that she heard his voice on the stairs before he actually made his appearance, telling my mother that he had hastened to assure her that we were in no danger. The rising was due to M. de Boutteville, who, being disappointed in his plan of seizing the Cardinal's nieces as hostages, had gone galloping up and down Paris with his sword drawn, shouting that the two darlings of the people, M. de Beaufort and the Coadjutor, had been seized. He wildly hoped that the uproar this was sure to excite would frighten the Queen-Regent into releasing the Princes as she had before released Broussel.

But the Coadjutor had come out with torches carried before him, and had discovered the name of the true prisoners, whose arrogance had so deeply offended the populace. He had summoned the Duke of Beaufort—the King of the Markets, as he was called—and he was riding about the streets with a splendid suite, whose gilded trappings glistened in the torchlight.

So deeply had the Prince's arrogance offended all Paris that the whole city passed from rage into a transport of joy, and the servants came and called us up to the top of the house to see the strange sight of the whole

city illuminated. It was wonderful to behold, every street and all the gates marked out by bright lights in the windows, and in the open spaces and crossings of the streets bonfires, with dark figures dancing wildly round them in perfect ecstasies of frantic delight; while guns were fired out, and the chorus of songs came up to us; horrid, savage, abusive songs, Sir Francis said they were, when he had plodded his way up to us on the roof, after having again reassured my mother, who had remained below trying to comfort the weeping Cécile.

Sir Francis said he had asked a tradesman with whom he dealt, ordinarily a very reasonable and respectable man, what good they expected from this arrest that it should cause such a mad delirium of joy. The man was utterly at a loss to tell him anything but that the enemies of Paris were fallen. And then he began shouting and dancing as frantically as ever.

It was to his wife and me that the English knight told his adventures; Annora and M. Darpent had drawn apart on the opposite side of the parapet. If to Madame d'Aubépine this great stroke of policy meant nothing but that her husband was in prison, to my sister a popular disturbance signified chiefly a chance of meeting Clément Darpent; and Lady Ommaney and I exchanged glances and would not look that way. Nay, we stayed as long as we could bear the cold of that January night, to give them a little more time. For, as I cannot too often

remind you, my grand-daughters, we treated an English maiden, and especially one who had had so many experiences as my sister, very differently from a simple child fresh from her convent.

Nicolas at last came up with a message from Madame la Baronne to beg that we would come down. We found that the Intendante Croquelebois (*erst* Gringrimeau) had brought the children in a panic, lest the houses of the partisans of the Princes should be attacked. She had put on a cloak and hood, made them look as like children of the people as she could, and brought them on foot through the streets; and there stood the poor little things, trembling and crying, and very glad to find their mother and cling to her. She had never thought of this danger, and was shocked at herself for deserting them. And it was a vain alarm; for, as M. Darpent assured her, M. d'Aubépine was not conspicuous enough to have become a mark for public hatred.

She was a little affronted by the assurance, but we appeased her, and as the tumult was beginning to die away, M. Darpent took his leave, promising my mother to let her know of any measure taken on the morrow. He offered to protect Madame d'Aubépine and her children back to their own hôtel, but we could not let the poor wife go back with her grief, nor the children turn out again on the winter's night. I was glad to see that she seemed now on perfectly good terms with her *dame de*

compagnie, who showed herself really solicitous for her and her comfort, and did not seem displeased when I took her to my room. I found my poor little sister-in-law on the whole less unhappy than formerly. People do get accustomed to everything, and she had somehow come to believe that it was the proper and fashionable arrangement, and made her husband more distinguished, that he should imitate his Prince by living apart from her, and only occasionally issuing his commands to her. He had not treated her of late with open contempt, and he had once or twice taken a little notice of his son, and all this encouraged her in her firm and quiet trust that in process of time, trouble, age, or illness would bring him back to her. Her eyes began to brighten as she wondered whether she could not obtain his liberty by falling at the Queen's feet with a petition, leading her children in her hands. "They were so beautiful. The Queen must grant anything on the sight of her little chevalier!"

And then she had a thousand motherly anecdotes of the children's sweetness and cleverness to regale me with till she had talked herself tolerably happily to sleep.

We kept her with us, as there were reports the next day of arrests among the ladies of the Princes' party. The two Princesses of Condé were permitted to retire to Chantilly, but then the Dowager-Princess was known to be loyal, and the younger one was supposed to be a nonentity. Madame de Longueville was summoned to

the Palace, but she chose instead to hide herself in a little house in the Faubourg St. Germain, whence she escaped to Normandy, her husband's Government, hoping to raise the people there to demand his release and that of her brothers.

The Princes' *intendant* was taken, and there was an attempt to arrest the whole Bouillon family, but the Duke and his brother, M. de Turenne, were warned in time and escaped. As to the Duchess and her children, their adventures were so curious that I must pause to tell their story. A guard was sent to her house under arms to keep her there. There were four little boys, and their attendants, on seeing the guards, let them straight out through the midst of them, as if they were visitors, the servants saying: "You must go-away. *Messieurs les petits Princes* cannot play to-day. They are made prisoners." They were taken to the house of Marshal de Guesbriant, where they were dressed as girls, and thus carried off to Bellechasse, whence they were sent to Blois.

There the little Chevalier of seven years old (Emmanuel Théodore was his name, and he is now a Cardinal) fell ill, and could not go on with his brothers when they were sent southwards, but was left with a lady named Fléchine. By and by, when the Court came to Guienne, Madame de Fléchine was afraid of being compromised if she was found to have a son of the Duke of Bouillon in the house. She recollected that there was in a very

thick wood in the park a very thick bush, forming a bower or vault, concealed by thorns and briars. There she placed the little boy with his servant Defargues, giving them some bread, wine, water, a pie, a cushion, and an umbrella in case of rain, and she went out herself every night to meet Defargues and bring him fresh provisions. His Eminence has once told me all about it, and how dreadfully frightened he was when Defargues had to leave him. Once there was a thunderstorm in the valet's absence, and when a glow-worm shone out afterwards the poor child thought it was lightning remaining on the ground, and screamed out to Defargues not to come in past it. He says Defargues was a most excellent and pious soul, and taught him more of his religion than ever he had known before. Afterwards Madame de Fléchine moved them to a little tower in the park, where they found a book of the *Lives of the Saints*, and Defargues taught his little master to make wicker baskets. They walked out on the summer nights, and enjoyed themselves very much.

As to poor Madame de Bouillon, her baby was born on that very day of the arrest. Her sister-in-law and her eldest daughter remained with her, and Madame Carnavalet; the captain of the guards had to watch over them all. He was of course a gentleman whom they already knew, and he lived with them as a guest. As soon as Madame de Bouillon had recovered, they began to play

at a sort of hide-and-seek, daring him to find them in the hiding-places they devised, till at last he was not at all alarmed at missing them. Then Madame de Bouillon and her daughter escaped through a cellar-window, and they would have got safely off, if the daughter had not caught the smallpox. Her mother, who was already on the way to Bordeaux, came back to nurse her, and was taken by the bedside, and shut up in the Bastille.

The two Princesses were at Chantilly, and rumours reached us that the younger lady was about to attempt something for the deliverance of her husband, and thereupon Madame d'Aubépine became frantic to join them, and to share in their councils. We tried to convince her that she could be of no use, but no—suppose they were going to raise their vassals, she could do the same by those of d'Aubépine, and she, who had hitherto been the most timid and helpless of beings, now rose into strong resolution and even daring. It was in vain that I represented to her that to raise one's vassals to make war on the King was rank rebellion. To her there was only one king—the husband who deserved so little from her. She had given him her whole devotion, soul and body, and was utterly incapable of seeing anything else. And Madame Croquelebbis, being equally devoted to M. le Comte, was thus more in her confidence than we were. She told us at last with a thousand thanks that she had resolved, on offering her services to the Princesses, and

that she should send the children with Madame Croquelebois into Anjou ; where she thought they would be safer than at Paris. We were sorry, but there was a determination now in our little Cécile that made her quite an altered woman. So she repaired to Montroud, where the younger Princess of Condé had retired, and was acting by the advice of M. Lénet, the Prince's chief confidant.

The next thing we heard of her was astonishing enough. The Princess, a delicate sickly woman, together with our little Countess, had left Montroud in the night with fifty horse. The Princess rode on a pillion behind M. de Coligny, Cécile in the same way, and the little Duke of Enghien was on a little saddle in front of Vialas, his equerry. On they went, day and night, avoiding towns and villages, and seldom halting except in the fields. Happily it was the month of May, or those two delicate beings never could have lived through it, but Cécile afterwards told us that she had never felt so well in her life.

Near the town of Saint Céré they met the Dukes of Bouillon and La Rochefoucauld, with eight hundred men, mostly gentlemen, who were ready to take up their cause. The Princess, hitherto so shy, gratefully and eagerly greeted and thanked them, and the little Duke made his little speech. " Indeed I am not afraid of Mazarin any more, since I see you here with so many brave men. I

only expect the liberty of my good papa through their valour and yours."

There were great acclamations at this pretty little address, and then the boy rode with his mother through the eight squadrons in which the troop was drawn up, saluting the officers like a true little Prince, with his hat in his hand, while there were loud shouts of "*Vive le Roi! Vivent les Princes!*" and such a yell of "Down with Mazarin!" as made Cécile tremble.

She was expecting her own share in the matter all along, and presently she had the delight of seeing twenty more men coming with Croquelebois at their head, and by his side, on a little pony, her own little Maurice, the Chevalier d'Aubépine.

Was not Cécile a proud woman then? I have a letter of hers in which she says (poor dear thing!) that he was a perfect little Prince Charmant; and he really was a pretty little fellow, and very well trained and good, adoring her as she deserved.

I will go on with her story, though only at second hand, before I proceed with my own, which for a time took me from the scene of my friend's troubles. This is written for her grandchildren as much as my own and my sister's, and it is well they should know what a woman she truly was, and how love gave her strength in her weakness.

The Princess of Condé, whose history and whose

troubles were only too like her own, already loved her extremely, and welcomed her little son as a companion to the Duke of Enghien. The Duke of Bouillon took them to his own fortress-town of Turenne, where they remained, while the little *bourg* of Brive la Gaillarde was taken from the royal troops by the Dukes. The regiment sent by the Cardinal to occupy the place was Prince Thomas of Savoy's gendarmes, and as of course they loved such generals as Turenne and Condé better than any one else, the loyalty of most of them gave way, and they joined the Princess's little army.

The Duke of Bouillon entertained his guests splendidly, though his poor Duchess was absent in the Bastille. The ladies had to dine every day in the great hall with all the officers, and it was a regular banquet, always beginning and ending with Condé's health. Great German goblets were served out to everybody, servants and all, and the Duke of Bouillon began by unsheathing his sword, and taking off his hat, while he vowed to die in the service of the Princes, and never to return his sword to the scabbard—in metaphor, I suppose—till it was over. Everybody shouted in unison, waved the sword, flourished the hat, and then drank, sometimes standing, sometimes on their knees. The two little boys, with their tiny swords, were delighted to do the same, though their mothers took care that there should be more water than wine in their great goblets.

I afterwards asked Cécile, who was wont to shudder at the very sight of a sword, how she endured all these naked weapons flourishing round her. "Oh," she said, "did not I see my husband's liberty through them?"

The ladies were then escorted, partly on horseback, partly by boat, to Limeuil, and that same day their Dukes gained a victory over the royal troops, and captured all their baggage, treasure, and plate, so that Cécile actually heard the sounds of battle, and her husband might say, as the Prince did at Vincennes: "A fine state of things that my wife should be leading armies while I am watering pinks."

The wives had their pinks too, for the whole road to Bordeaux was scattered with flowers, and every one trooped out to bless the Princess and her son. As she entered the city the 400 vessels in the port fired all their guns three times over, and 30,000 men, escorting a splendid carriage, in which she went along at a foot's pace, came forth to welcome her. Her son was dressed in white taffety turned up with black and embroidered with silver, and had a hat with black and white feathers. He was held in a gentleman's arms at the window, and continually bowed, and held out his little hands to be kissed, saying that his father and grandfather had been quite right to love people who had such an affection for their house as these seemed to have. Maurice d'Aubépine, at the opposite window, was nodding away with a good will at

the people who were obliged to put up with him instead of the little Duke.

They came to a handsome house, which had been appointed for the Princess's residence, and there they had to walk up and down and display themselves upon the terrace to the admiring multitude.

They were very merry, though very tired, and M. Lénét, the Prince's gentleman, took great care of them, though the two Dukes remained outside with their little army. The next day the Princess, attended of course by Madame d'Aubépine, and a whole train of *noblesse* and influential people, went to the Parliament of Bordeaux with her petition for aid. She personally addressed each counsellor in the passage to the great hall, and represented to them the cruelty and ingratitude of Mazarin towards her husband, while her little son kissed and embraced and begged them for his father's liberty.

When all had assembled in the great chamber, and they had begun to deliberate, the Princess burst in on them, threw herself on her knees, and began a speech. When she broke off, choked by tears, her little son fell on his knees and exclaimed: "Gentlemen, be instead of a father to me; Cardinal Mazarin has taken away mine!"

Then there was a general weeping, and the Parliament promised the Princess their protection. There was more hesitation about admitting the two Dukes, but at last it was done. There were the headquarters of the

army that resisted the Crown. At least this was the principle on which the Duke of Bouillon acted. His family had from the first tried to maintain the privileges which the old feudal vassals attributed to themselves, and he was following up their traditions, as well as fighting for the deliverance of his wife from her captivity.

The Duke of Rochefoucauld was throughout more the lover of Madame de Longueville than anything else, and the Princess of Condé simply thought of obtaining her husband's release, and nothing else. She had no notions of State policy nor anything else of the kind, any more than had Madame d'Aubépine, who assisted daily at her little agitated court. They were the two gentlest, simplest, weakest conspirators who ever rebelled against the Crown, and it was all out of pure loyalty to the two husbands who had never shown a spark of affection, scarcely of courtesy, to either of them.

Well, the Queen herself and her son and all the Court came to reduce Bordeaux, Mademoiselle and all, for she had been for the time detached from the adoration of the Prince, by, of all things in the world, hopes given her of marrying her little cousin, the King, though he was only twelve and she was double that age. So Bordeaux was besieged, and held out against the royal troops for some days, being encouraged by the resolute demeanour of the Princess; but at last, when one of the *faubourgs* had been taken, the Parliament, uneasy in con-

science at resisting the Crown, decided on capitulating, and, to the bitter disappointment and indignation of the ladies, made no stipulations as to the liberty of the husband.

No attempt was made on the liberty of the lady herself, and she was ordered to depart to Chantilly. Though unwell, she had visited every counsellor in his own house, and done her utmost to prepare for the renewal of the resistance in case her husband was not released; and she was almost exhausted with fatigue when she went on board a vessel which was to take her to Larmont, whence she meant to go to Coutras, where she was to be permitted to stay for three days.

Many nobles and people of condition, and half the population of Bordeaux, came down to the port with her, uttering lamentations, benedictions on her and her boy, and curses on Mazarin.

While about to embark she met Marshal de la Meilleraye, who advised her to go and see the Queen at Bourg, and she accordingly put herself under his direction, Cécile of course accompanying her as her attendant. The Duke of Damville came to fetch them in a carriage, and after alighting at Marshal de la Meilleraye's quarters, kind messages of inquiry were sent them by all the Court, even by the King and Queen, by every one indeed except Mademoiselle, who kept up her dislike.

My son, who was present, described all to me, and

how his blood boiled at the scornful airs of Mademoiselle and the stiffness of the Queen. He said, however, that his aunt looked quite like a changed woman as she entered, leading Maurice in the rear of the other mother and son.

The poor Princess had been bled the day before, and had her arm in a scarf, and Mademoiselle actually tittered at the manner in which it was put on, when this devoted wife was presented to the Queen, leading her little son.

Falling on her knees before the Queen she made her a really touching speech, begging her to excuse the attempts of a lady who had the honour of being married to the first Prince of the blood, when she strove to break his fetters. "You see us on our knees, Madame, to beg for the liberty of what is dearest to us. Grant it to the great actions that *Monsieur mon mari* has performed for the glory of your Majesty, and the life he has ventured so often in the service of the State, and do not refuse our tears and humble prayers."

The Queen answered coldly enough. Cécile told me afterwards that it was like ice, dashing all her hopes, to see the stern, haughty dignity of Anne of Austria unmoved by the tender, tearful, imploring form of Claire Clemence de Bréze, trembling all over with agitation, and worn down with all she had attempted. "I am glad, cousin," said the Queen, "that you know your fault.

You see you have taken a bad method of obtaining what you ask. Now your conduct is to be different, I will see whether I can give you what you desire."

In spite of her fright and the Queen's chilly pride, Cécile, feeling that this was her only chance, fell almost on her face before the Queen, with Maurice by her side, and cried: "Grace, grace, great Queen, for my husband."

My little Marquis, as he told me, could not bear to see them thus alone, so he ran forward, and knelt on her other side, holding her hand. And he heard a horrid little laugh, something about a new edition and an imitation; but the Queen, who had forgotten all about her, asked who she was and what her husband was.

Then, when it was explained that the Count d'Aubépine had drawn his sword and tried to aid Boutteville, there was another smile. Perhaps it was that the contrast might mortify the poor Princess, but the Queen said:

"There! stand up, Madame la Comtesse! We will send orders that the Count shall be released. He has expiated his own zeal, and will know better another time."

Can any one conceive our Cécile's joy? She rose up and embraced both the boys passionately, and Gaspard could not refrain from congratulating her with the words, scarcely complimentary: "My aunt, is it not indeed the lion and the mouse? Now my uncle must love you, as my papa loved my mamma."

The Princess, always too sweet and gentle for envy, kissed and congratulated Madame d'Aubépine, and left her on retiring to Milly. Nor did Cécile quit the Court till she actually was the bearer of an order for the release of her husband.

CHAPTER VI.

FAMILY HONOUR.

I HAVE gone on with the d'Aubépine side of the story, but while these two devoted wives were making exertions at Bordeaux so foreign to their whole nature, which seemed changed for their husbands' sake, I was far away at the time, even from my son.

It was in March that we received a letter from my brother, Lord Walwyn, bidding us adieu, being, when we received it, already on the high seas with the Marquis of Montrose, to strike another blow for the King. He said he could endure inaction no longer, and that his health had improved so much that he should not be a drag on the expedition. Moreover, it was highly necessary that the Marquis should be accompanied by gentlemen of rank, birth, and experience, who could be entrusted with commands, and when so many hung back it was the more needful for some to go. It was a great stroke to us, for besides that Sir Andrew Macniven went on reiterating that it was mere madness, and there was not a hope of

success—the idea of Eustace going to face the winds of spring in the islands of Scotland was shocking enough.

“The hyperborean Orcades,” as the Abbé called them, made us think of nothing but frost and ice and savages, and we could not believe Sir Andrew when he told us that the Hebrides and all the west coast of Scotland were warmer than Paris in the winter.

After this we heard nothing—nothing but the terrible tidings that the Great Marquis, as the Cavaliers called him, had been defeated, taken by treachery, and executed by hanging—yes, by hanging at Edinburgh! His followers were said to be all dispersed and destroyed, and our hearts died within us; but Annora said she neither would nor could believe that all was over till she had more positive news, and put my mother in mind how many times before they had heard of the deaths of men who appeared alive and well immediately after. She declared that she daily expected to see Eustace walk into the room, and she looked round for him whenever the door was opened.

The door did open at last to let in tidings from the Hague, but not brought by Eustace. It was Mr. Probyn, one of the King’s gentlemen, however, who told me he had been charged to put into my hands the following letter from His Majesty himself:—

“MADAME—If you were still my subject I should command you, as you are ever my old playfellow. Meg, I entreat you to

come without delay to a true subject and old playfellow of mine, who, having already sorely imperilled his neck and his health, and escaped, as they say, by the skin of his teeth, would fain follow me into the same jeopardy again did I not commit him to such safe wardship as that of Madame de Bellaise. Probyn will tell you further. He also bears a letter that will secure you letters and passports from the Queen-Regent. When next you hear of me it will be with one of my crowns on my head. CHARLES R."

Therewith was a brief note from Eustace himself:—

"SWEET MEG—Be not terrified at what they tell you of me. I have been preserved by a miracle in the miserable destruction of our armament and our noble leader. Would that my life could have gone for his! They take such a passing ailment as I have often before shaken off for more than it is worth, but I will write more from shipboard. Time presses at present. With my loving and dutiful greetings to my mother, and all love to my sister,

"Thine,

"E. WALWYN AND RIBAUMONT."

Mr. Probyn told us more, and very sad it was, though still we had cause for joy. When Montrose's little troop was defeated and broken up at the Pass of Invercharron my brother had fled with the Marquis, and had shared his wanderings in Ross-shire for some days; but, as might only too surely have been expected, the exposure brought back his former illness, and he was obliged to take shelter in the cabin of a poor old Scotchwoman. She—blessings be on her head!—was faithful and compassionate, and would not deliver him up to his enemies, and thus his sickness preserved him from being taken with his leader by the wretched Macleod of Assynt.

Just as he grew a little better, her son, who was a pedlar, arrived at the hut. He too was a merciful man, and, moreover, was loyal in heart to the King, and had fought in Montrose's first rising; and he undertook to guide my brother safely across Scotland and obtain his passage in one of the vessels that traded between Leith and Amsterdam. Happily Eustace always had a tongue that could readily catch the trick of dialects, and this excellent pedlar guarded him like his own brother, and took care to help him through all pressing and perplexing circumstances. Providentially, it was the height of summer, and the days were at their longest and warmest, or I know not how he could have gone through it at all; but at last he safely reached Leith, passing through Edinburgh with a pack on his back the very day that the Marquis of Huntly was executed. He was safely embarked on board a Dutch lugger, making large engagements of payment, which were accepted when he was known to have estates in France as well as in England; and thus he landed at Amsterdam, and made his way to the Hague, where all was in full preparation for the King's expedition to Scotland on the invitation of the nation.

So undaunted was my dear brother's spirit that, though he was manifestly very ill from the effects of exposure and fatigue, and of a rough voyage in a wretched vessel, he insisted that he should recover in a few days, and would have embarked at once with the King had not

absolute orders to the contrary, on his duty as a subject, been laid upon him. Mr. Probyn did not conceal from us that the learned Dutch physician, Doctor Dirkins, thought his condition very serious, and that only great care could save his life.

Of course I made up my mind at once to set forth and travel as quickly as I could—the King had kindly secured my permission—and to take Tryphena with me, as she knew better than any one what to do for Eustace. Annora besought permission to accompany me, and, to my surprise, my mother consented, saying to me in confidence that she did not like leaving her in Lady Ommaney's care while she herself was with the Queen of England. Lady Ommaney was not of sufficient rank, and had ideas. In effect, I believe my mother had begun to have her suspicions about Clément Darpent, though she was too proud to betray them even to me, and thought separation a good thing, never guessing, as I did, that one part of Nan's eagerness to be with her brother was in order to confide in him, and to persuade him as she had never been able to do by letter. There remained my son to be disposed of, but I had full confidence in the Abbé, who had bred up his father so well, and my boy would, I knew, always look up to him and obey him,* so that I could leave him in his care when not in waiting, and they were even to spend the summer together in a little expedition to Nid de Merle. I wanted to see my son love his country

home as English gentlemen love theirs ; but I fear that can never be, since what forms affection is the habit of conferring benefits, and we are permitted to do so little for our peasants.

Thus, then, it was settled. I went to Mademoiselle, who was always good-natured where her vanity was not concerned, and who freely granted me permission to absent myself. The Queen-Regent had been prepared by her nephew, and she made no difficulties, and thus my great travelling carriage came again into requisition ; but as an escort was necessary, we asked Sir Andrew Macniven to accompany us, knowing that he would be glad to be at the Hague in case it should be expedient to follow His English Majesty to Scotland. We sent a courier to find my brother Solivet at Amiens, that he might meet and come part of the way with us. As to M. de Lamont, I was no longer in dread of him, as he had gone off to join the troops which the Dukes of Bouillon and Rochefoucauld were collecting to compel the deliverance of the Princes ; but the whole time was a dangerous one, for disbanded soldiers and robbers might lurk anywhere, and we were obliged to take six outriders armed to the teeth, besides the servants upon the carriage, of all of whom Sir Andrew took the command, for he could speak French perfectly, having studied in his youth in the University of Leyden.

Thus we took leave of Paris and of my mother, many of our friends coming out with us the first stage as far

as St. Denys, where we all dined together. I could have excused them, as I would fain have had my son all to myself, and no doubt my sister felt the same, for Clément Darpent had also come. For the Frondeurs, or those supposed to be Frondeurs, were at this time courted by both parties, by the friends of the Prince in order to gain their aid in his release, and by the Court in order to be strengthened against the Prince's supporters; and thus the lawyers were treated with a studied courtesy that for the time made it appear as if they were to be henceforth, as in England, received as gentlemen, and treated on terms more like equality; and thus Clément joined with those who escorted us, and had a few minutes, though very few, of conversation with my sister, in which he gave her a packet for my brother.

I was not obliged to be cautious about knowing anything now that I should be out of reach of my mother, and all was to be laid before my brother. I could say nothing on the road, for our women were in the coach with us, and when we halted Sir Andrew of course was with us. The posts were not to be so much relied on as they are at present, and we had to send relays of horses forward to await us at each stage in order to have no delay, and he, who had made the journey before, managed all this excellently for us.

At night we two sisters shared the same room, and then it was that I asked Nan to tell me what was in her heart.

“What is the use?” she said; “you have become one of these proud French nobility who cannot see worth or manhood unless a man can count a lineage of a hundred ancestors, half-ape, half-tiger.”

However, the poor child was glad enough to tell me all, even though I argued with her that, deeply English as she was in faith and in habits and modes of thought, it would hardly result in happiness even if she did extort permission to wed one of a different nation and religion, on whom, moreover, she would be entirely dependent for companionship; since, though nothing could break the bonds of sisterly affection between her and me, all the rest of the persons of her own rank would throw her over, since even if M. Darpent could be ennobled, or would purchase an estate bringing a title, hers would still be esteemed a *mésalliance*, unworthy the daughter of Anselme de Ribaumont the Crusader, and of the “Bravest of Knights,” who gained the chaplet of pearls before Calais.

“Crusader!” said Annora; “I tell you that his is truly a holy war against oppression and wrong-doing. Look at your own poor peasants, Meg, and say if he, and those like him, are not doing their best to save this country from a tyranny as foul as ever was the Saracen grasp on the Holy Sepulchre!”

“He is very like to perish in it,” I said.

“Well,” said Nan, with a little shake in her voice,

"if they told those who perished in the Crusades that they died gloriously and their souls were safe, I am sure it may well be so with one who pleads the cause of the poor, and in despite of his own danger never drew his sword against his King."

There was no denying, even if one was not in love, and a little *tête montée* besides, like my poor Nan, that there was nobility of heart in Clément Darpent, especially as he kept his hands clear of rebellion; and I would not enter into the question of their differing religions. I left that for Eustace. I was certain that Annora knew, even better than I did, that the diversity between our parents had not been for the happiness of their children. In my own mind I saw little chance for the lovers, for I thought it inevitable that the Court and the Princes would draw together again, and that whether Cardinal Mazarin were sacrificed or not, the Frondeurs of Paris would be overthrown, and that Darpent, whose disinterestedness displeased all parties alike, was very likely to be made the victim. Therefore, though I was very sorry for what my sister might have to suffer, I could not but hope that the numerous difficulties in the way might prevent her from being linked to his fate, and actually sharing his ruin.

She was not in my hands, and I had not to decide, so I let her talk freely to me, and certainly, when we were alone together, her tongue ran on nothing else. I found that she hoped that Eustace would invite her lover

to the Hague, and let them be wedded there by one of the refugee English clergy, and then they would be ready to meet anything together; but that M. Darpent was withheld by filial scruples, which actuated him far more than any such considerations moved her, and that he also had such hopes for his Parliament that he could not throw himself out of the power of serving it at this critical time, a doubt which she appreciated, looking on him as equal to any hero in Plutarch's *Lives*.

Our brother De Solivet met us, and conducted us into Amiens, where he had secured charming rooms for us. He was very full of an excellent marriage that had been offered to him for one of his little daughters, so good that he was going to make the other take the veil in order that her sister's fortune might be adequate to the occasion; and he regretted my having left Paris, because he intended to have set me to discover which had the greatest inclination to the world and which the chief vocation for the cloister. Annora's Protestant eyes grew large and round with horror, and she exclaimed at last:

"So that is the way in which you French fathers deliberate how to make victims of your daughters?"

He made her a little bow, and said, with his superior fraternal air: ♠

"You do not understand, my sister. The happiest will probably be she who leads the peaceful life of a nun."

"That makes it worse," cried Annora, "if you are

arranging a marriage in which you expect your child to be less happy than if she were a nun."

"I said not so, sister," returned Solivet, with much patience and good-humour. "I simply meant what you, as a Huguenot, cannot perceive, that a simple life dedicated to Heaven is often happier than one exposed to the storms and vicissitudes of the world."

"Certainly you take good care it should prove so, when you make marriages such as that of the d'Aubépines," said Nan.

Solivet shrugged his shoulders by way of answer, and warned me afterwards to take good care of our sister, or she would do something that would shock us all. To which I answered that the family honour was safe in the hand of so high-minded a maiden as our Annora, and he replied :

"Then there is, as I averred, no truth in the absurd report that she was encouraging the presumptuous advances of that factious rogue and Frondeur, young Darpent, whom our brother had the folly to introduce into the family."

I did not answer, and perhaps he saw my blushes, for he added :

"If I thought so for a moment, she may be assured that his muddy *bourgeois* blood should at once be shed to preserve the purity of the family with which I have the honour to be connected."

He was terribly in earnest, he, a Colonel in His

Majesty's service, a father of a family, a staid and prudent man, and more than forty years old ! I durst say no more but that I thought Eustace was the natural protector and head of the Ribauumont family.

"A boy, my dear sister ; a mere hot-headed boy, and full of unsettled fancies besides. In matters like this it is for me to think for the family. My mother depends on me, and my sister may be assured that I shall do so."

I wondered whether my mother had given him a hint, and I also considered whether to put Annora upon her guard ; but there was already quite enough mutual dislike between her and our half-brother, and I thought it better not to influence it. Solivet escorted us as far as his military duties permitted, which was almost to Calais, where we embarked for the Meuse, and there, when our passports had been examined and our baggage searched, in how different a world we found ourselves ! It was like passing from a half-cultivated, poverty-stricken heath into a garden, tilled to the utmost, every field beautifully kept, and the great haycocks standing up tall in the fields, with the hay-makers round them in their curious caps, while the sails of boats and barges glided along between the trees in the canals that traversed them unseen ; and as to the villages, they were like toys, their very walks bright with coloured tiles, and the fronts of the houses shining like the face of a newly-washed child. Indeed, as we found, the maids do stand in front of them every morning and splash them

from eaves to foundation with buckets of water ; while as to the gardens, they were full of the brightest and gayest of flowers, and with palings painted of fanciful colours. All along the rivers and canals there were little painted houses, with gay pavilions and balconies with fanciful carved railings overhanging the water, and stages of flower-pots arranged in them. Sometimes a stout Dutch vrow with full, white, spotless sleeves, many-coloured substantial petticoats, gold buckles in her shoes, and a great white cap with a kind of gold band round her head, sat knitting there ; or sometimes a Dutchman in trunk hose was fishing there. We saw them all, for we had entered a barge or *trekschuyt*, towed by horses on the bank, a great flat-bottomed thing, that perfectly held our carriage. Thus we were to go by the canals to the Hague, and no words can describe the strange silence and tranquillity of our motion along the still waters.

My sister and her nurse, who had so often cried out against both the noisiness and the dirtiness of poor France, might well be satisfied now. They said they had never seen anything approaching to it in England. It was more like being shut up in a china closet than anything else, and it seemed as if the people were all dumb or dead, as we passed through those silent villages, while the great windmills along the banks kept waving their huge arms in silence, till Annora declared she felt she must presently scream, or ride a tilt with them like Don Quixote.

And all the time, as we came nearer and nearer, our hearts sank more and more, as we wondered in what state we should find our dear brother, and whether we should find him at all.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HAGUE.

AT last we passed a distant steeple and large castle, which we were told belonged to Ryswyk, the castle of the Prince of Orange; then we went along through long rows of trees, and suddenly emerging from them we beheld a vast plain, a great wood, and a city crowned with towers and windmills.

Sir Andrew had been there before, and after showing our passports, and paying our fare to the boatman, who received it in a leathern bag, he left the servants to manage the landing of the carriage at the wharf, and took us through the streets, which were as scrupulously clean and well washed, pavement and all, as if they had been the flags of an English kitchen, and as silent, he said, as a Sunday morning in Edinburgh. Even the children looked like little models of Dutchmen and Dutchwomen, and were just as solid, sober, and silent; and when Sir Andrew, who could speak Dutch, asked a little boy our way to the street whence my brother had dated his letter, the

child gave his directions with the grave solemnity of a judge.

At last we made our way to the Mynheer Fronk's house, where we had been told we should find my Lord Walwyn's lodgings. It was a very tall house, with a cradle for a stork's nest at the top, and one of the birds standing on a single long thin leg on the ridge of the very high roof. There were open stalls for cheese on either side of the door, and a staircase leading up between. Sir Andrew made it known to a Dutchman, in a broad hat, that we were Lord Walwyn's sisters come to see him, and he thereupon called a stout maid, in a snowy round cap and kerchief, who in the first place looked at our shoes, then produced a brush and a cloth, and, going down on her knees, proceeded to wipe them and clean them. Sir Andrew submitted, as one quite accustomed to the process, and told us we might think ourselves fortunate that she did not actually insist on carrying us all upstairs, as some Dutch maids would do with visitors, rather than permit the purity of their stairs and passages to be soiled.

He extracted, meantime, from the Dutchman, that the Englishman had been very ill with violent bleedings at the lungs, but was somewhat better; and thus we were in some degree prepared, when we had mounted up many, many stairs, to find our Eustace sitting in his cloak, though it was a warm summer day, with his feet

up on a wooden chair in front of him, and looking white, wasted, weak, as I had never seen him.

He started to his feet as the door opened and he beheld us, and would have sprung forward, but he was obliged to drop back into his chair again, and only hold out his arms.

"My sisters, my sisters!" he said; "I had thought never to have seen you again!"

"And you would have sailed again for Scotland!" said Annora.

"I should have been strong in the face of the enemy," he replied, but faintly.

There was much to be done for him. The room was a very poor and bare one, rigidly clean, of course, but with hardly any furniture in it but a bed, table, and two chairs, and the mistress or her maid ruthlessly scoured it every morning, without regard to the damp that the poor patient must inhale.

It appeared that since his expedition to Scotland the estate in Dorset had been seized, so that Harry Merri-court could send him no more remittances, and, as the question about the Ribaumont property in Picardy was by no means decided, he had been reduced to sad straits. His Dutch hostess was not courteous, and complained very much that all the English cavaliers in exile professed to have rich kindred who would make up for everything, but she could not see that anything came of it. • However,

she did give him house-room, and, though grumbling, had provided him with many comforts and good fare, such as he was sure could not be purchased out of the very small sum he could give her by the week.

“And how provided?” he said. “Ah, Nan, can you forgive me? I have had to pledge the last pearl of the chaplet, but I knew that Meg would redeem it.”

He had indeed suffered much, and we were eager to do our utmost for his recovery. We found the house crowded with people, and redolent of cheese. This small, chilly garret chamber was by no means proper for a man in his state of health, nor was there room for us in the house. So, leaving Nan with him, I went forth with Sir Andrew to seek for fresh lodgings. I need not tell how we tramped about the streets, and asked at many doors, before we could find any abode that would receive us. There were indeed lodgings left vacant by the gentlemen who had attended the King to Scotland, but perforce, so many scores had been left unpaid that there was great reluctance to receive any cavalier family, and the more high-sounding the name, the less trust there was in it. Nothing but paying down a month beforehand sufficed to obtain accommodation for us in a house belonging to a portly widow, and even there Nan and I would have to eat with the family (and so would my brother if he were well enough), and only two bedrooms and one sitting-room could be allotted to us. However, these were large

and airy ; the hangings, beds, and linen spotless ; the floors and tables shining like mirrors ; the windows clean, sunny, and bright ; so we were content, and had our mails deposited there at once, though we could not attempt to move my brother so late in the day.

Indeed, I found him so entirely spent and exhausted by his conversation with Annora, that I would not let him say any more that night, but left him to the charge of Tryphena, who would not hear of leaving him, and was very angry with Mistress Nan, who, she said, in her English speech, would talk a horse's head off when once she began. In the morning Sir Andrew escorted us to the lodgings, where we found my brother already dressed, by the help of Nicolas, and looking forward to the change cheerfully. I had given Sir Andrew my purse, begging him, with his knowledge of Dutch, to discharge the reckoning for me, after which he was to go to find a chair, a coach, or anything that could be had to convey my brother in, for indeed he was hardly fit to walk downstairs.

Presently the Scottish knight knocked at the door, and desired to speak with me. "What does this mean, Madame ?" he said, looking much amused. "My lord here has friends. The good vrow declares that all his charges have been amply paid by one who bade her see that he wanted for nothing, and often sent dainty fare for him."

"Was no name given ?"

"None ; and the vrow declares herself sworn to secrecy ;

but I observed that by a *lapsus lingue*, she implied that the sustenance came from a female hand. Have you any suspicions that my lord has a secret admirer?"

I could only say that I believed that many impoverished cavaliers had met with great and secret kindness from the nobility of Holland; that the King of England, as he knew, had interested himself about my brother, and as we all had been, so to say, brought up in intimacy with the royal family, I did not think it impossible that the Princess of Orange might have interested herself about him, though she might not wish to have it known, for fear of exciting expectations in others. Of course all the time I had other suspicions, but I could not communicate them, though they were increased when Sir Andrew went with Eustace's pledge to redeem the pearl; but he came back in wrath and despair, telling me that a rascally Dutch merchant had smelt it out, and had offered a huge price for it, which the goldsmith had not withstood, despairing of its ransom.

Eustace did not ask who the merchant was, but I saw the hot blood mounting in his pale cheek. Happily Annora was not present, so inconvenient questions were avoided. He was worn out with the being carried in a chair and then mounting the stairs, even with the aid of Sir Andrew's arm.

Tryphena, however, had a nourishing posset for him, and we laid him on a day-bed which had been made ready

for him, where he smiled at us, said, "This is comfort," and dropped asleep while I sat by him. There I stayed, watching him, while Nan, whose nature never was to sit still, went forth, attended by Sir Andrew and Nicolas, to obtain some needments. If she had known the language, and if it had been fitting for a young demoiselle of her birth, she might have gone alone; these were the safest streets, and the most free from riot or violence of any kind that I ever inhabited.

While she was gone, Eustace awoke, and presently began talking to me, and asking me about all that had passed, and about which we had not dared to write. Nan, he said, had told him her story, and he was horrified at the peril I had incurred. I replied that was all past, and was as nothing compared with the consequences, of which my sister had no doubt informed him. "Yes," he said, "I did not think it of Darpent." I said I supposed that the young man could not help the original presumption of loving Annora, and that I could bear testimony that they had been surprised into confessing it to one another. He sighed, and said: "True. I had thought that the barrier between the robe and the sword was so fixed in a French mind that I should as soon have expected Nicolas to aspire to Mademoiselle de Ribaumont's hand as Clément Darpent."

"But in her own eyes she is not Mademoiselle de Ribaumont so much as Mistress Annora Ribmont," I said;

“and thus she treated him in a manner to encourage his audacity.”

“Even so,” said Eustace, “and Annora is no mere child, not one of your *jeunes filles*, who may be disposed of at one’s will. She is a woman grown, and has been bred in the midst of civil wars. She had refused Harry Merrycourt before we left home, and she knows how to frighten away all the suitors our mother would find for her. Darpent is deeply worthy. We should esteem and honour him as a gentleman in England; and were he there, and were our Church as once it was, he would be a devout and thankful member of it. Margaret, we must persuade my mother to consent.”

I could not help rejoicing; and then he added: “The King has been well received, and is about to be crowned in Scotland. It may well be that our way home may be opened. In that case, Meg, you, my joint-heiresses, would have something to inherit, and before going to Scotland I had drawn up a will giving you and your Gaspard the French claims, and Annora the English estates. I know the division is not equal; but Gaspard can never be English, and Annora can never be French; and may make nearly as much of an Englishman of Darpent as our grandfather was.”

“Nay, nay, Eustace,” I said; “the names of Walwyn and Ribault must not be lost.”

“She may make Darpent deserve a fresh creation,

then," he answered, smiling sadly. "It will be best to wait a little, as I have told her, to see how matters turn out at home."

I assented with all my heart, and told him what our brother Solivet had said.

"Yes," he said; "Solivet and our mother will brook the matter much better if she is to live in England, the barbarous land that they can forget. And if I do not live, I will leave them each a letter that they cannot quite disregard."

I said I was glad he had not consented to Annora's notion of bringing Darpent to Holland, since Solivet might lie in wait for him, and besides, it would not be treating our mother rightly.

"No," said Eustace; "if I am ever strong enough again I must return to Paris, and endeavour to overcome their opposition." And he spoke with a weary sigh, though I augured that he would soon improve under our care, and that of Tryphena, who had always been better for him than any doctor. Then I could not help reproaching him a little with having ventured himself in that terrible climate and hopeless cause.

"As to the climate, that was not so much amiss," said Eustace. "Western Scotland is better and more wholesome than these Dutch marshes. The sea-gull fares better than the frog."

"But the cause," I said. "Why did you not wait to go with the King?"

"There were reasons, Meg," he said. "The King was hounding—yes, hounding out the Marquis to lead the forlorn hope. Heaven forgive me for my disloyalty in thinking he wished to be quit of one so distasteful to the Covenanters who have invited him."

And when I broke forth in indignation, Eustace lowered his voice, and said sadly that the King was changed in many points from the Prince of Wales, and that listening to policy was not good for him. Then I asked why, if the King hounded, as he called it, the Marquis on this unhappy expedition, should Eustace have shared in it?

"It was enough to anger any honest man," said Eustace, "to see the flower of all the cavaliers thus risked without a man of rank or weight to back him, with mere adventurers and remnants of Goring's fellows, and Irishmen that could only do him damage with the Scots. I, with neither wife nor child, might well be the one to share the venture."

"Forgetting your sisters," said I. "Ah, Eustace, was there no other cause to make you restless?"

"You push me hard, Meg. Yes, to you I will say it, that there was a face among the ladies here which I could not look on calmly, and I knew it was best for her and for myself that I should be away."

"Is she there still?" I asked.

"I know not. Her husband had taken her to his

country-house last time I heard, and very few know that I am not gone with the King. It was but at the last moment that he forbade me. It is better so."

I thought of what his hostess had told me, but I decided for the present to keep my own counsel.

We thought it right to pay our respects to the Princess of Orange, but she was keeping very little state. Her husband, the Stadtholder, was on bad terms with the States, and had just failed in a great attack on Amsterdam; and both he and she were indisposed. The Princess Royal replied therefore to our request for admittance, that she could not refuse to see such old friends of her family as the ladies of Ribauumont, but that we must excuse her for giving us a private reception.

Accordingly we were conducted through numerous courts, up a broad staircase of shining polished wood, through a large room, to a cabinet hung with pictures, among which her martyred father held the foremost place. She was a thin woman, with a nose already too large for her face, inherited no doubt from her grandfather, the Grand Monarque, and her manner had not the lively grace of her mother's, but seemed as if it had been chilled and made formal by her being so early transported to Holland. She was taken thither at ten years old, and was not yet nineteen; and though I had once or twice played with her before my marriage, she could not be expected to remember me. So the interview was very

stiff at first, in spite of her kind inquiries for my brother, whom she said the King loved and valued greatly. I wondered whether it could have been she who had provided for his needs, and threw out a hint to see if so it were, but she evidently did not understand me, and our visit soon ended.

Our way of life at the Hague was soon formed. Eustace was our first thought and care, and we did whatever we thought best for his health. I would fain have taken him back to Paris with us, but autumn was setting in, and he was not in a state to be moved, being only able to walk from one room to the other, and I could hardly hope that he would gain strength before the winter set in, since a sea voyage would be necessary, as we could not pass through the Spanish Netherlands that lay between us and France. Besides, while the King was in Scotland, he always entertained the hope of a summons to England. Other exiles were waiting in the same manner as ourselves, and from time to time we saw something of them. The gentlemen would come and sit with my brother, and tell him of the news, and we exchanged visits with the ladies, whom Annora recognised at the room where an English minister held their service; but they were a much graver and quieter set of exiles than those we had known at Paris. They could hardly be poorer than those; indeed, many were less straitened, but they did not carry off their poverty in the same gay and lively manner, and if they

had only torn lace and soiled threadbare garments, they shut themselves up from all eyes, instead of ruffling gaily as if their rags were tokens of honour.

Besides, more than one event occurred to sadden that banished company. The tidings came of the death of the young Lady Elizabeth, who had pined away in the hands of her keepers, and died a week after her arrival at Carisbrooke, where her father had been so long a prisoner, her cheek resting on her open Bible.

Annora, who had known her as a grave, sweet, thoughtful child, grieved much for her, broken-hearted as she seemed to have been for her father; and the Princess of Orange, knowing that Nan had seen the poor young lady more lately than herself, sent for her to converse and tell of the pretty childish ways of that "rosebud born in snow," as an English poet prettily termed the young captive.

Ere long the poor Princess was in even more grievous trouble. Her husband, the young Prince of Orange, died of smallpox, whereupon she fell into such transports of grief that there was the greatest anxiety respecting her, not only from compassion, but because she was the staunch supporter of her exiled family to the best of her ability.

Eight days later, on her own nineteenth birthday, her son was born; and in such gloom, that it was a marvel that mother or babe survived, for the entire rooms were hung with black, and even the cradle of the child was

covered completely with black velvet, so that the poor little puny infant seemed as if he were being put into a coffin. We saw the doleful chamber ourselves, for Eustace sent us to pay our respects, and Queen Henrietta honoured me with commands to write her a report of her widowed daughter and first grandson.

For we were still at the Hague, Eustace gradually regaining strength, and the bleedings had almost entirely ceased ; but the physician who attended him, the best I think whom I have ever known, and whose regimen did him more good than any other he had adopted, charged me, as I valued his life, not to attempt a journey with him till after the winter should be over, and summer entirely set in. If the effusion of blood could be prevented he might even yet recover and live to old age, but if it recurred again Dr. Dirkius would not answer for his life for an hour ; nor must he do aught that would give him a rheum or renew his cough.

After all, we were very peaceful and happy in those rooms at the Hague, though Eustace was very anxious about the King, Annora's heart was at Paris, and I yearned after my son, from whom I had never thought to be so long parted ; but we kept our cares to ourselves, and were cheerful with one another. We bought or borrowed books, and read them together, we learned to make Holland lace, studied Dutch cookery, and Annora, by Eustace's wish, took lessons on the lute and spinnet,

her education in those matters having been untimely cut short. By the way, she had a real taste for music, and the finding that her performance and her singing amused and refreshed him gave her further zeal to continue the study and conquer the difficulties, though she would otherwise have said she was too old to go to school.

Then the frost set in, and all the canals and sluggish streams were sheets of ice, to which the market people skated, flying along upon the ice like birds. We kept my brother's room as warm as it was in our power to do, and made him lie in bed till the house was thoroughly heated, and he did not suffer much or become materially worse in the winter, but he was urgent upon us to go out and see the curious sights and share the diversions as far as was possible for us. Most of the Dutch ladies skated beautifully, and the younger ones performed dances on the ice with their cavaliers, but all was done more quietly than usual on account of the mourning, the Prince of Orange being not yet buried, and his child frail and sickly. The Baptism did not take place till January, and then we were especially invited to be present. Though of course my brother could not go, Annora and I did so. The poor child had three sets of States-General for his godfathers, his godmothers being his grandmother, the elder Princess of Orange, and his great-aunt, Queen Elizabeth of Bohemia. The Duke of York, who had lately arrived, was asked to carry the little Prince to church, but he shuddered at the

notion of touching a baby, as much as did his sister at the idea of trusting her precious child with him, so the infant was placed in the arms of one of his young aunts, Mademoiselle Albertine of Nassau.

I saw no more than a roll of ermine, and did not understand much of the long sermon with which the Dutch minister preluded the ceremony, and which was as alien to my sister's ideas of a christening as it was to mine. Many other English ladies were mingled with the Dutch ones in the long rows that lined the aisle, and I confess that my eyes wandered a good deal, guessing which were my countrywomen. Nearly oppositè to me was one of the' sweetest faces I have ever seen, the complexion quite pearly white, the hair of pale gold, in shining little rings over the brow, which was wonderfully pure, though with an almost childish overtone. There was peace on the soft dark eyes and delicately-moulded lips and the fair, oval, though somewhat thin cheeks. It was a perfect refreshment to see that countenance, and it reminded me of two most incongruous and dissimilar ones—namely, the angelic face of the Duchess de Longueville when I had first seen her in her innocent, untainted girlhood, and of the expression on the worn old countenance of Madame Darpent.

I was venturing a glance now and then to delight myself without disconcerting that gentle lady, when I felt Annora's hand on my arm, squeezing so hard, poor maid,

that her fingers left a purple mark there, and though she did not speak, I beheld, as it were, darts and arrows in the gleam of her eyes. And then it was that I saw on the black velvet dress worn by the lady a part of a necklace of large pearls—the pearls of Ribaumont—though I should not have known them again, nor perhaps would Nan, save for the wearer.

“Flaunting them in our very faces,” muttered poor Nan; and if eyes could have slain, hers would have killed the poor Vrow van Hunker on the spot. As it was, the dark eyes met her fierce glance and sank beneath it, while such a painful crimson suffused the fair cheeks that I longed to fly to the rescue, and to give at least a look of assurance that I acquitted her of all blame, and did not share my sister’s indignation. But there was no uplifting of the eyelids again till the ceremony was ended, and we all had to take our places again in one of the thirty state coaches in which the company had come to the christening.

I saw Madame van Hunker led out by a solid, wooden-faced old Dutchman, who looked more like her father than her husband; and I told Annora that I was sure she had worn the pearls only because he compelled her.

“Belike,” said my sister. “She hath no more will of her own than a hank of flax! That men can waste their hearts on such moppets as that!”

But though we did not at all agree on the impression

Madame van Hunker had made on us, we were of one mind to say nothing of it to Eustace.

Another person laid her hand on Annora's arm as she was about to enter our carriage. "Mistress Ribmont!" she exclaimed; "I knew not that you were present in this land of our exile."

I looked and saw a lady, as fantastically dressed as the mourning would permit, and with a keen clever face, and Nan curtsied, saying: "My Lady Marchioness of Newcastle! let me present to you my sister, Madame la Vicomtesse de Bellaise."

She curtsied and asked in return for Lord Walwyn, declaring that her lord would come and see him, and that we must come to visit her. "We are living poorly enough, but my lord's good daughter Jane doth her best for us and hath of late sent us a supply; so we are making merry while it lasts, and shall have some sleighing on ice-hills to-morrow, after the fashion of the country. Do you come, my good ladies! The Duke of York is to be there! The poor lad is cruelly moped in yonder black-hung place, with his widowed sister and her mother-in-law, and I would fain give him a little sport with young folk."

Lady Newcastle's speech was cut short by her lord, who came to insist on her getting into the coach, which was delaying for her, and on the way home Nan began to tell me of her droll pretensions, which were like an

awkward imitation of the best days of the Hôtel Rambouillet.

She also told me about the noble-hearted Lady Jane Cavendish, the daughter of the Marquis's first marriage—how she held out a house of her father against the rebels, and acted like a brave captain, until the place was stormed, and she and her sister were made prisoners. The Roundhead captain did not treat them with over-ceremony, but such was the Lady Jane's generous nature that when the Royalists came to her relief, and he was made captive in his turn, she saved his life by her intercession.

She had since remained in England, living in a small lodge near the ruins of her father's house at Bolsover, to obtain what she could for his maintenance abroad, and to collect together such remnants of the better times as she might, such as the family portraits, and the hangings of the hall. I longed to see this very worthy and noble lady, but she was out of our reach, being better employed in England. Nan gave a little sigh to England, but not such a sigh as she would once have heaved.

And we agreed on the way home to say nothing to my brother of our meeting with poor Millicent.

My Lord Marquis of Newcastle showed his esteem for my brother by coming to see him that very day, so soon as he could escape from the banquet held in honour of the christening, which, like all that was done by the

Dutch, was serious and grim enough, though it could not be said to be sober.

He declared that he had been ignorant that Lord Walwyn was at the Hague, or he should have waited on him immediately after arriving there, "since nothing," said the Marquis, "does me good like the sight of an honest cavalier." I am sure Eustace might have said the same; and they sat talking together long and earnestly about how it fared with the King in Scotland, and how he had been made to take the Covenant, which, as they said, was in very truth a dissembling which must do him grievous ill, spiritually, however it might serve temporally. My lord repeated his lady's invitation to a dinner, which was to be followed up by sleighing on hills formed of ice. Annora, who always loved rapid motion as an exhilaration of spirits, brightened at the notion, and Eustace was anxious that it should be accepted, and thus we found ourselves pledged to enter into the diversions of the place.

CHAPTER VIII.

HUNKERSLUST.

So to my Lord Marquis of Newcastle's dinner we went, and found ourselves regaled with more of good cheer than poor cavaliers could usually offer. There was not only a good sirloin of beef, but a goose, and many choice wild-fowl from the fens of the country. There was plum porridge too, which I had not seen since I left England at my marriage. Every one was so much charmed at the sight that I thought I ought to be so too, but I confess that it was too much for me, and that I had to own that it is true that the English are gross feeders. The Duke of York was there, looking brighter and more manly than I had yet seen him, enlivened perhaps by my Lady Newcastle, who talked to him, without ceasing, on all sorts of subjects. She would not permit the gentlemen to sit after dinner, because she would have us all out to enjoy her sport on the ice-hills, which were slopes made with boards, first covered with snow, and then with water poured over them till they were perfectly smooth and like glass. I

cannot say that I liked the notion of rushing down them, but it seemed to fill Annora with ecstasy, and my lady provided her with a sleigh and a cavalier, before herself instructing the Duke of York in the guidance of her own sledge upon another ice-hill.

My Lord Marquis did me the honour to walk with me and converse on my brother. There was a paved terrace beneath a high wall which was swept clear of snow and strewn with sand and ashes, so that those who had no turn for the ice-hills could promenade there and gaze upon the sport. When his other duties as a host called him away, his Lordship said, with a smile, that he would make acquainted with each other two of his own countrywomen, both alike disguised under foreign names, and therewith he presented Madame van Hunker to me. Being on the same side of the table we had not previously seen one another, nor indeed would she have known me by sight, since I had left England before her arrival at Court.

She knew my name instantly, and the crimson colour rushed into those fair cheeks as she made a very low reverence, and murmured some faltering civility.

We were left together, for all the other guests near us were Hollanders, whose language I could not speak, and who despised French too much to learn it. So, as we paced along, I endeavoured to say something trivial of the Prince's christening and the like, which might begin the conversation; and I was too sorry for her to speak with the frigid-

ity with which my sister thought she ought to be treated. Then gradually she took courage to reply, and I found that she had come in attendance on her stepdaughter Cornelia who, was extremely devoted to these sleighing parties. The other daughter, Veronica, was at home, indisposed, having, as well as her father, caught a feverish cold on a late expedition into the country, and Madame would fain have given up the party, as she thought Cornelia likewise to be unwell, but her father would not hear of his favourite Keetje being disappointed. I gathered that the Yungvrow Cornelia had all the true Dutch obstinacy of nature. By and by she ventured timidly, trying to make her voice sound as if she were only fulfilling an ordinary call of politeness, to hope that my Lord Walwyn was in better health. I told her a little of his condition, and she replied with a few soft half-utterances; but before we had gone far in our conversation there was a sudden commotion among the sleighing party—an accident, as we supposed—and we both hurried forward in anxiety for our charges. My sister was well, I was at once reassured by seeing her gray and ermine hood, which I knew well, for it was my own, towering above the other ladies; but it was Mademoiselle van Hunker who lay insensible. It was not from a fall, but the cold had perhaps struck her, they said, for after her second descent she had complained of giddiness, and had almost immediately swooned away. She was lying on the sledge, quite unconscious, and no one

seemed to know what to do. Her stepmother and I came to her; I raised her head and put essences to her nose, and Madame van Hunker took off her gloves and rubbed her hands, while my Lady Newcastle, hurrying up, bade them carry her into the house, and revive her by the fire; but Madame van Hunker insisted and implored that she should not be taken indoors, but carried home at once, showing a passion and vehemence quite unlike one so gentle, and which our good host and hostess withstood till she hinted that she feared it might be more than a swoon, since her father and sister were already indisposed. Then, indeed, all were ready enough to stand aloof; a coach was procured, I know not how, and poor Cornelia was lifted into it, still unconscious, or only moaning a little. I could not let the poor young stepmother go with her alone, and no one else would make the offer, the dread of contagion keeping all at a distance, after what had passed. At first I think Madame van Hunker hardly perceived who was with her, but as I spoke a word or two in English, as we tried to accommodate the inanimate form between us, she looked up and said: "Ah! I should not have let you come, Madame! I do everything wrong. I pray you to leave me!" Then, as I of course refused, she added: "Ah, you know not——" and then whispered in my ear, though the poor senseless girl would scarce have caught the sound, the dreadful word "smallpox." I could answer at once that I had had it—long, long ago, in my childish days,

when my grandmother nursed me and both my brothers through it, and she breathed freely. I asked her why she apprehended it, and she told me that some weeks ago her husband had taken the whole party down to his pleasure-house in the country, to superintend some arrangement in his garden, which he wished to make before the frost set in.

He and his daughter Veronica had been ailing for some days, but it was only on that very morning that tidings had come to the Hague that the smallpox had, on the very day of their visit, declared itself in the family of the gardener who kept the house, and that two of his children were since dead. Poor Millicent had not dared to mention the matter in her family, and had done all in her power to persuade Cornelia to give up the party, but her persuasions only had the effect of strengthening the determination of the young lady and of her father, and they carried the day. Millicent had always had a feeble will, which yielded against her judgment and wishes. She had not had the malady herself, "But oh! my child," she said, "my little Emilia!" And when I found that the child had not been on the expedition to Hunkerslust, and had not seen her father or sister since they had been sickening, I ventured to promise that I would take her home, and the young mother clasped my hand in fervent gratitude.

But we were not prepared for the scene that met us

when we drove into the *porte cochère*. The place seemed deserted, not a servant was to be seen but one old wrinkled hag, who hobbled up to the door saying something in Dutch that made Madame van Hunker clasp her hands and exclaim: "All fled! Oh, what shall we do?"

At that moment, however, Dr. Dirkius appeared at the door. He spoke French, and he explained that he had been sent for about an hour ago, and no sooner had he detected smallpox than Mynheer's valet had fled from his master's room and spread the panic throughout the household, so that every servant, except one scullion and this old woman, had deserted it. The Dutch have more good qualities than the French, their opposites, are inclined to believe, but they have also a headstrong selfishness that seems almost beyond reach. Nor perhaps had poor Mynheer van Hunker been a master who would win much affection.

I know not what we should have done if Dr. Dirkius had not helped me to carry Cornelia to her chamber. The good man had also locked the little Emilia into her room, intending, after having taken the first measures for the care of his patients, to take or send her to the ladies at Lord Newcastle's, warning them not to return. Madame van Hunker looked deadly pale, but she was a true wife, and said nothing should induce her to forsake her husband and his daughters; besides, it must be too late for her to take precautions. Dirkius looked her all over in her

pure delicate beauty, muttering what I think was: "Pity! pity!" and then agreed that so it was. As we stood by the bed where we had laid Cornelia, we could hear at one end old Hunker's voice shouting—almost howling—for his vrow; and likewise the poor little Emilia thumping wildly against the door, and screaming for her mother to let her out. Millicent's face worked, but she said: "She must not touch me! She had best not see me! Madame, God sent in you an angel of mercy. Take her; I must go to my husband!"

And at a renewed shout she ran down the corridor to hide her tears. The doctor and I looked at one another. I asked if a nurse was coming. Perchance, he said; he must go and find some old woman, and old Trudje must suffice meantime. There would as yet be no risk in my taking the child away, if I held her fast, and made her breathe essences all through the house.

It was a strange capture, and a dreadful terror for the poor little girl. By his advice I sprinkled strong essences all over a large kerchief, and as I opened the door threw it over the poor little girl's head, snatched her up in my arms, and before she had breath to scream hurried downstairs with her. She was about three years old, and it was not till I was almost at the outer door that she began to kick and struggle. My mind was made up to return as soon as she was safe. It was impossible to leave that poor woman to deal alone with three such cases, and I

knew what my brother would feel about it. And all fell out better than I could have hoped, for under the *porte cochère* was the coach in which we had come to Lady Newcastle's. My sister, learning that I had gone home with Madame van Hunker, had driven thither to fetch me, and Nicolas was vainly trying to find some one to tell me that she was waiting. I carried the child, now sobbing and calling for her mother, to the carriage, and explained the state of affairs as well as I could while trying to hush her. Annora was quick to understand, and not slow to approve. "The brutes!" she said. "Have they abandoned them? Yes, Meg, you are safe, and you cannot help staying. Give me the poor child! I will do my best for her. Oh yes! I will take care of Eustace, and I'll send you your clothes. I wish it was any one else, but he will be glad. So adieu, and take care of yourself! Come, little one, do not be afraid. We are going to see a kind gentleman."

But as poor little Emilia knew no English, this must have failed to console her, and they drove away amid her sobs and cries, while I returned to my strange task. I was not altogether cut off from home, for my faithful Nicolas, though uncertain whether he had been secured from the contagion, declared that where his mistress went he went. Tryphena would have come too, but like a true old nurse she had no confidence in Mistress Nan's care of my brother, or of the child, and it was far better

as it was, for the old women whom the doctor found for us were good for nothing but to drink and to sleep; whereas Nicolas, like a true French *laquais*, had infinite resources in time of need. He was poor Madame's only assistant in the terrible nursing of her husband; he made the most excellent *tisanes* and *bouillons* for the patients, and kept us nurses constantly supported with good meats and wines, without which we never could have gone through the fatigue; he was always at hand, and seemed to sleep, if he slept at all, with one ear and one eye open during that terrible fifteen days during which neither Madame van Hunker, he, nor I, ever took off our clothes. Moreover, he managed our communication with my family. Every day in early morning he carried a billet from me which he placed in a pan of vinegar at their door; and, at his whistle, Annora looked out and threw down a billet for me, which, to my joy and comfort, generally told me that my brother was no worse, and that the little maid was quite well, and a great amusement to him. He was the only one who could speak any Dutch, so that he had been able to do more with her than the others at her first arrival; and though she very soon picked up English enough to understand everything, and to make herself understood in a droll, broken baby tongue, she continued to be devoted to him. She was a pretty, fair child of three years old, with enough of Dutch serenity and gravity not to be troublesome after the first shock was over, and

she beguiled many of his weary hours of confinement by the games in which he joined her. He sent out to buy for her a jointed baby, which Annora dressed for her, and, as she wrote, my lord was as much interested about the Lady Belphebe's robes (for so had he named her) as was Emilia, and he was her most devoted knight, daily contriving fresh feasts and pageants for her ladyship. Nan declared that she was sometimes quite jealous of Belphebe and her little mistress; but, on the whole, I think she enjoyed the months when she had Eustace practically to herself.

For we were separated for months. Poor Cornelia's illness was very short; the chill taken at the sleighing party had been fatal to her at the beginning of the complaint, and she expired on the third day, with hardly any interval of consciousness.

Her sister, Veronica, was my chief charge. I had to keep her constantly rolled in red cloth in a dark room, while the fever ran very high, and she suffered much. I think she was too ill to feel greatly the discomfort of being tended by a person who could not speak her language, and indeed necessity enabled me to understand a tongue so much like English, which indeed she could herself readily speak when her brain began to clear. This, however, was not for full a fortnight, and in the meantime Mynheer van Hunker was growing worse and worse, and he died on the sixteenth day of his illness.

His wife had watched over him day and night with unspeakable tenderness and devotion, though I fear he never showed her much gratitude in return ; he had been too much used to think of women as mere housewifely slaves.

She had called me in to help in her terror at the last symptoms of approaching death, and I heard him mutter to her: "Thou hast come to be a tolerable housewife. I have taken care thou dost not lavish all on beggarly strangers."

At least so the words came back on me afterwards ; but we were absorbed in our attendance on him in his extremity, and when death had come at last I had to lead her away drooping and utterly spent. Alas ! it was not exhaustion alone, she had imbibed the dreadful disease, and for another three weeks she hung between life and death. Her stepdaughter left her bed, and was sent away to the country-house to recover, under the care of the steward's wife, before Millicent could open her eyes or lift her head from her pillow ; but she did at last begin to revive, and it was in those days of slow convalescence that she and I became very dear to one another.

We could talk together of home, as she loved to call England, and of her little daughter, of whom Annora sent me daily reports, which drew out the mother's smiles. She could not be broken-hearted for Mynheer van Hunker, nor did she profess so to be, but she said he had been kind to her—much kinder since she had really tried to

please him ; and that, she said—and then broke off—was after he—your brother—my lord—— And she went no further, but I knew well afterwards what that chance meeting had done for her—that meeting which, with such men as I had too often seen at Paris, might have been fatal for ever to her peace of mind and purity of conscience by renewing vain regrets, not to be indulged without a stain. Nay, it had instead given her a new impulse, set her in the way of peace, and helped her to turn with new effort to the path of duty that was left to her. And she had grown far happier therein. Her husband had been kinder to her after she ceased to vex him by a piteous submission and demonstrative resignation ; his child had been given to brighten her with hope ; and that she had gained his daughter's affection I had found by Veronica's conversation about her, and her tears when permitted to see her—or rather to enter her dark chamber for a few moments before going to Hunkerslust, the name of the country-house near Delf. Those days of darkness, when the fever had spent itself, and the strength was slowly returning, were indeed a time when hearts could flow into one another ; and certainly I had never found any friend who so perfectly and entirely suited me as that sweet Millicent. There was perhaps a lack of strength of resolute will ; she had not the robust temper of my high-spirited Annora, but, on the other hand, she was not a mere blindly patient Grisel, like my poor

sister-in-law Cécile d'Aubépine, but could think and resolve for herself, and hold stanchly to her duty when she saw it, whatever it might cost her; nor did terror make her hide anything, and thus she had won old Hunker's trust, and he had even permitted her to attend the service of exiled English ministers at the Hague.

One of them came to see her two or three times—once when she seemed to be at the point of death, and twice afterwards, reading prayers with her, to her great comfort. He spoke of her as an angel of goodness, spending all the means allowed her by her husband among her poor exiled countrymen and women. And as she used no concealment, and only took what was supplied to her for her own "*menus plaisirs*," her husband might grumble, but did not forbid. I knew now that my brother had loved in her something more than the lovely face.

And oh for that beauty! I felt as though I were trying to guard a treasure for him as I used every means I had heard of to save it from disfigurement, not permitting one ray of daylight to penetrate into the room, and attempting whatever could prevent the marks from remaining. And here Millicent's habits of patience and self-command came to her aid, and Dr. Dirkius said he had never had a better or a gentler sick person to deal with.

Alas! it was all in vain. Millicent's beauty had been of that delicate fragile description to which small-

pox is the most fatal enemy, with its tendency not only to thicken the complexion, but to destroy the refined form of the features. We were prepared for the dreadful redness at first, and when Millicent first beheld herself in the glass she contrived to laugh, while she wondered what her little Emilia would say to her changed appearance, and also adding that she wondered how it fared with her step-daughter, a more important question, she tried to say, than for herself, for the young lady was betrothed to a rich merchant's son, and would be married as soon as the days of mourning were over. However, as Veronica had never been reckoned a beauty, and *les beaux yeux de sa cassette* had been avowedly the attraction, we hoped that, however it might be, there would not be much difference in her lot.

We were to join her at Hunkerslust to rid ourselves of infection, while the house was purified from it. Before we went, Annora daily brought little Emilia before the window that her mother might see the little creature, who looked so grown and so full of health as to rejoice our hearts. My brother and sister seemed to have made the little maid much more animated than suited a Dutch child, for she skipped, frolicked, and held up her wooden baby, making joyous gestures in a way that astonished the solemn streets of Graavehage, as the inhabitants call it. She was to come to us at Hunkerslust so soon as the purification was complete ; and then I was to go back

to my brother and sister, for as the spring advanced it was needful that we should return to France, to our mother and my son.

It was April by the time Madame van Hunker was fit to move, and the great coach came to the door to carry us out the three or four miles into the country. I shall never forget the charm of leaving the pest-house I had inhabited so long, and driving through the avenues, all budding with fresh young foliage, and past gardens glowing with the gayest of flowers, the canals making shining mirrors for tree, windmill, bridge, and house, the broad meadows full of fine cattle grazing. Our sleek, round-built horses trotted in a leisurely way along the broad smooth roads, and Millicent, holding one of my hands, lay back on the cushions, deeply shrouded in her widow's veil, unwilling to speak, but glad of the delight I could not help feeling.

We arrived at the house, and entered between the row of limes clipped in arches. Never did I behold such a *coup d'œil* as the garden presented, with its paved and tiled paths between little beds of the most gorgeous hyacinths and tulips, their colours assorted to perfection, and all in full bloom. I could not restrain a childish cry of wonder and absolute joy at the first glance; it was such a surprise, and yet I recollected the next moment that there was something very sad in the display, for it was in going to superintend this very garden that poor

Mynheer van Hunker had caught his death, and here were these his flowers blooming away gaily in the sun unseen by him who had cared for them so much.

Veronica had come to meet us, and she and her step-mother wept in each other's arms at the sight and the remembrances it excited; but their grief was calm, and it appeared that Veronica had had a visit from her betrothed and his mother, and had no reason to be dissatisfied with their demeanour. Indeed, the young lady's portion must be so much augmented by her sister's death that it was likely to compensate for the seams in her cheeks.

No matter of business had yet come before the widow, but it was intimated to her that the notary, Magister Wyk, would do himself the honour of coming to her at Hunkerslust so soon as she felt herself strong enough to receive him, and to hear the provisions of the will.

Accordingly he came, the whole man impregnated with pungent perfumes and with a pouncet-box in his hand, so that it almost made one sneeze to approach him. He was by no means solicitous of any near neighbourhood to either of the ladies, but was evidently glad to keep the whole length of the hall-table between them and himself, at least so I heard, for of course I did not thrust myself into the matter, but I learned afterwards that Mynheer van Hunker had left a very large amount of money and lands, which were divided between his daughters, subject

to a very handsome jointure to his wife, who was to possess both the houses at the Hague and at Hunkerslust for her life, but would forfeit both these and her income should she marry any one save a native of the States of Holland. Her jewels, however, were her own, and the portion she had received from her father, Sir James Wardour.

As she said to me afterwards, her husband hated all foreigners, and she held him as having behaved with great kindness and liberality to her ; but, she added with a smile, as she turned bravely towards a mirror behind her, he need not have laid her under the restriction, for such things were all over for her. And happily he had not forbidden her to do as she pleased with her wealth.

That very evening she began to arrange for packets of dollars from unknown hands to find themselves in the lodgings of the poorest cavaliers ; and for weekly payments to be made at the ordinaries that they might give their English frequenters substantial meals at a nominal cost. She became quite merry over her little plots ; but there was a weight as of lead on my heart when I thought of my brother, and that her freedom had only begun on such terms. Nay, I knew not for what to hope or wish !

Permission had been given for Emilia to return to her mother, and as Veronica had some purchases to make in the city, she undertook to drive in in the coach, and

bring out her little sister. I should have availed myself of the opportunity of going back with her but that Millicent would have had to spend the day alone, and I could see that, though her mother's heart hungered for the little one, yet she dreaded the child's seeing her altered face. She said she hoped Veronica might not return till twilight or dusk, so that Emilia might recognise her by her voice and her kisses before seeing her face.

She had been bidden to be out in the air, and she and I had walked down the avenue in search of some cuckoo-flowers and king-cups that grew by the canal below. She loved them, she said, because they grew at home by the banks of the Thames, and she was going to dress some beaupots to make her chamber gay for Emilia. The gardens might be her own, but she stood in too much awe of the gardener to touch a tulip or a flower-de-luce, scarce even a lily of the valley; but when I taxed her with it, she smiled and said she should ever love the English wild-flowers best.

So we were walking back under the shade of the budding lime-trees when a coach came rolling behind us. The horses were not the fat dappled grays of the establishment, but brown ones, and Millicent, apprehending a visit from some of her late husband's kindred, and unwilling to be seen before they reached the house, drew behind a tree, hoping to be out of sight.

She had, however, been descried. The carriage stopped.

There was a joyful cry in good English of "Mother! mother! mother!" and the little maiden flew headlong into her arms, while at the same moment my dear brother, looking indeed thin, but most noble, most handsome, embraced me. He explained in a few words that Mademoiselle van Hunker was dining with her future mother-in-law, and that she had permitted him to have the honour of giving up his charge to Madame.

Millicent looked up at him with the eyes that could not but be sweet, and began to utter her thanks, while he smiled and said that the pleasure to him and Annora had been so great that the obligation was theirs.

The little girl, now holding her hand, was peering up curiously under her hood, and broke upon their stiffness and formality by a sudden outcry:

"No! no! mother is not ugly like Vronikje. She *shall* not be ugly. She is Emilia's own dear pretty mother, and nobody shall say no."

No doubt the little one felt the inward attraction of child to mother, that something which so infinitely surpasses mere complexion, and as she had been warned of the change, and had seen it in her sister, she was really agreeably surprised, and above all felt that she had her mother again.

Millicent clasped her to her bosom in a transport of joy, while Eustace exclaimed:

"The little maid is right; most deeply right. That which truly matters can never be taken away."

Then Millicent raised her eyes to him and said, with quivering lip: "I had so greatly dreaded this moment. I owe it to you, my lord, that she has come to me thus."

Before he could answer Emilia had seen the golden flowers in her mother's hand, and with a childish shriek of ecstasy had claimed them, while Millicent said:

"I had culled them for thee, sweetheart."

"I'll give some to my lord!" cried the child. "My lord loves king-cups."

"Yes," said Eustace, taking the flowers and kissing the child, but with his eyes on her mother's all the time; "I have loved king-cups ever since one May day when there was a boat going down the river to Richmond."

Her eyes fell, and that strange trembling came round her mouth. For, as I learned afterwards from my sister, it was then that they had danced in Richmond Park, and he had made a crown of king-cups and set it on her flaxen hair, and then and there it was that love had first begun between those two, whom ten years had so strangely changed. But Eustace said no more, except to tell me that he had come to ask if I could be ready to return to Paris the second day ensuing, as Sir Edward Hyde was going, and had a pass by which we could all together go through the Spanish Netherlands without taking ship.

If Madame van Hunker could spare me on such sudden notice he would like to take me back with him at once.

There was no reason for delay. Millicent had her child, and was really quite well again; and I had very little preparation to make, having with me as little clothing as possible. She took Eustace to the tiled fireplace in the parlour; and served him with manchet-cake and wine, but prayed him to pardon her absence while she went to aid me. I think neither wished for a *tête-à-tête*. They had understood one another over the king-cups, and it was no time to go farther. I need not tell of the embraces and tears between us in my chamber. They were but natural, after the time we had spent together, but at the end Millicent whispered:

"You will tell him all, Margaret! He is too noble, but his generous soul must feel no bondage towards one who has nothing—not even a face or a purse for him."

"Only a heart," I said. But she shook her head in reproof, and I felt that I had done wrong to speak on the matter.

After a brief time we took leave with full and stately formality. I think both she and I were on our guard against giving way before my brother, who had that grave self-restrained countenance which only Englishmen seem able to maintain. He was thin, and there was a certain transparency of skin about his cheeks and hands; but to my mind he looked better than when he left us at Paris,

and I could not but trust that the hope which had returned to him would be an absolute cure for all his ill-health. I saw it in his eyes.

We seated ourselves in the carriage, and I dreaded to break the silence at first, but we had not long turned into the highroad from the avenue when hoofs came behind us, and a servant from Hunkerslust rode up to the window, handing in a packet which he said had been left behind.

I sat for a few minutes without opening it, and deemed it was my Book of Hours, for it was wrapped in a kerchief of my own; but when I unfolded that, behold I saw a small sandal-wood casket, and turning the key, I beheld these few words—"Praying my Lord Walwyn to permit restitution to be made.—M. van H." And beneath lay the pearls of Ribaumont.

"No! no! no! I cannot!" cried my brother, rising to lean from the window and beckon back the messenger; but I pulled him by the skirts, telling him it was too late, and whatever he might think fit to do, he must not wound the lady's feelings by casting them back upon her in this sudden manner, almost as if he were flinging them at her head. He sat down again, but reiterated that he could not accept them.

I told him that her jewels were wholly her own, subject to no restriction, but this only made him ask me with some displeasure whether I had been privy to this matter; the which I could wholly deny, since not a word

had passed between us, save on the schemes for sending aid to the distressed families.

"I thought not," he returned; and then he began to show me, what needed little proof, how absolutely inexpedient it was for his honour or for hers, that he should accept anything from her, and how much more fitting it was that they should be absolutely out of reach of all intercourse with one another during her year of mourning, or until he could fitly address her.

"No," he said; "the pearls must remain hers unless she can come with them; or if not, as is most like, we shall be the last of the Ribaumonts—and she may do as she will with them."

"You have no doubts, Eustace?" I cried. "You care not for her wealth, and as to her face, a year will make it as fair and sweet as ever."

"As sweet in my eyes, assuredly!" he said. But he went on to say that her very haste in this matter was a token that she meant to have no more to do with him, and that no one could wish her to give up her wealth and prosperity to accept a poor broken cavalier, health and wealth alike gone.

I would have argued cheeringly, but he made me understand that his own Dorset estates, which Harry Merrycourt had redeemed for him before, had been absolutely forfeited by his share in Montrose's expedition. The Commonwealth had in a manner condoned what had

been done in the service of King Charles, but it regarded as treason the espousing the cause of his son ; and it was possible that the charge on the Wardour estates might be refused to Millicent should she unite herself with one who was esteemed a rebel.

My mother's jointure had been charged on the Ribau-mont estate, and if Eustace failed to gain the suit which had been lingering on so long, there would hardly be enough rents to pay this to her, leaving almost nothing for him. Nor, indeed, was it in my power to do much for their assistance, since my situation was not what it would have been if my dear husband had lived to become Marquis de Nidemerle. And we were neither of us young enough to think that even the most constant love could make it fit to drag Millicent into beggary. Yet still I could see that Eustace did not give up hope. The more I began to despond, the more cheerful he became. Was not the King in Scotland, and when he entered England, as he would certainly do next summer, would not all good Cavaliers—yes, and all the Parliament men who had had enough of the domineering of General Cromwell—rise on his behalf ? My brother was holding himself in readiness to obey the first summons to his standard, and when he was restored, all would be easy, and he could offer himself to Millicent worthily.

Moreover, my mother had written something about a way that had opened for accommodating the suit respect-

ing the property in Picardy, and Eustace trusted the report all the more because our brother Solivet had also written to urge his recall, in order to confer with his antagonist, the Comte de Poligny, respecting it. So that, as the dear brother impressed on me, he had every reason for hoping that in a year's time he might seek Madame van Hunker in a very different guise; and his hopes raised mine, so that I let them peep through the letter with which I returned the jewels to Millicent.

CHAPTER IX.

THE EXPEDIENT.

(*Annora's Narrative.*)

AND what was this expedient of theirs? Now, Madame Meg, I forewarn you that what I write here will be a horror and bad example to all your well-brought-up French grandchildren, *demoiselles bien élevées*, so that I advise you to re-write it in your own fashion, and show me up as a shocking, wilful, headstrong, bad daughter, deserving of the worst fate of the bad princesses in Madame d'Aulnoy's fairy tales. Nay, I am not sure that Mademoiselle de Nidemerle might not think I had actually incurred a piteous lot. But *chacun à son goût*.

Well, this same expedient was this. M. de Poligny, who claimed the best half of the Picardy estates in right of a grant from Henry III. when in the power of the League, had made acquaintance with our half-brother, Solivet, who had presented him to our mother, and he had offered, with the greatest generosity possible—said my mother—to waive his claims and put a stop to the

suit (he knew it could not hold for a moment), provided she would give her fair daughter to his son, the Chevalier de Poligny, with the reversion of the Ribauumont property, after my brother, on whom, vulture that he was, he had fixed his eyes, as a man in failing health. My mother and her eldest son were absolutely enraptured, and they expected Eustace to be equally delighted with this escape from all difficulties. They were closeted with him for two hours the morning after our return, while Meg was left to enjoy herself with her son, and to converse with Madame d'Aubépine. That poor little thing's Elysium had come to an end as soon as the Princes were released from prison. No sooner did her husband find that his idol, the Prince of Condé, showed neither gratitude nor moderate civility to the faithful wife who had fought so hard for him, than his ape must needs follow in his track, and cast off Cécile—though, of course, she still held that his duty kept him in attendance on the Prince, and that he would return to her.

I do not know whether they were afraid of me, for not a word did any of them say of the results of their conferences, only I was informed that we were to have a reception in the evening, and a new white taffeta dress, with all my mother's best jewels, was put out for me, and my mother herself came to preside at my toilette and arrange my curls. I did not suspect mischief even then, for I thought it was all in honour of Solivet's poor little

Petronille, whom he had succeeded in marrying to a fat old Duke. What a transformation it was from the meek little silent *pensionnaire* without a word to say for herself, into a gay butterfly, with a lovelock on her shoulder, a coquettish twist of her neck, and all the language of the fan, as well as of tongue, ready learned ! I do not think her father was quite happy about her manners, but then it served him right, and he had got a dukedom for his grandchildren by shutting up his other poor daughter in a convent.

By and by I saw my brother bowing with extra politeness, and then Solivet found me out, and did himself the honour to present to me Monsieur le Comte de Poligny, who, in his turn, presented M. le Chevalier. The Count was a rather good-looking Frenchman, with the air of having seen the world ; the Chevalier was a slight little whipper-snapper of a lad in the uniform of the dragoons, and looking more as if he were fastened to his sword and spurs than they to him. I think the father was rather embarrassed not to find me a little prim demoiselle, but a woman capable of talking about politics like other people ; and while I rejoiced that the Cardinal had been put to flight by the Prince, I told them that no good would come of it, unless some one would pluck up a spirit and care more for his fellow-creatures than for his own intrigues.

Solivet looked comically dismayed to hear such inde-

pendent sentiments coming out of my mouth ; I know now that he was extremely afraid that M. de Poligny would be terrified out of his bargain. If I had only guessed at his purpose, and that such an effect might be produced, I would almost have gone the length of praising Mr. Hampden and Sir Thomas Fairfax to complete the work ; instead of which I stupidly bethought me of Eustace's warning not to do anything that might damage Margaret and her son, and I restrained myself.

The matter was only deferred till the next morning, when I was summoned to my mother's chamber, where she sat up in bed, with her best Flanders-lace nightcap and ruffles on, her coral rosary blessed by the Pope, her snuff-box with the Queen's portrait, and her big fan that had belonged to Queen Marie de Medicis, so that I knew something serious was in hand ; and, besides, my brothers Solivet and Walwyn sat on chairs by the head of her bed. Margaret was not there.

"My daughter," said my mother, when I had saluted her, and she had signed to me to be seated, "M. le Comte de Poligny has done you the honour to demand your hand for his son, the Chevalier ; and I have accepted his proposals, since by this means the *procès* will be terminated respecting the estates in Picardy, and he will come to a favourable accommodation with your brother, very important in the present circumstances."

I suppose she and Solivet expected me to submit

myself to my fate like a good little French girl. What I did was to turn round and exclaim : "Eustace, you have not sold me for this?"

He held out his hand, and said : "No, sister. I have told my mother and brother that my consent depends solely on you."

Then I felt safe, even when Solivet said :

"Nor does any well-brought-up daughter speak of her wishes when her parents have decided for her."

"You are not my parent, sir," I cried ; "you have no authority over me ! Nor am I what you call a well-brought-up girl—that is, a poor creature without a will !"

"It is as I always said," exclaimed my mother. "She will be a scandal."

But I need not describe the whole conversation, even if I could remember more than the opening. I believe I behaved very ill, and was in danger of injuring my own cause by my violence ; my mother cried, and said I should be a disgrace to the family, and Solivet looked fierce, handled the hilt of his sword, and observed that he should know how to prevent that ; and then Eustace took my hands, and said he would speak with me alone, and my mother declared that he would encourage me in my folly and undutifulness ; while Solivet added : "Remember we are in earnest. This is no child's play !"

A horrible dread had come over me that Eustace was in league with them ; for he always imperatively cut me

short if I dared to say I was already promised. I would hardly speak to him when at last he brought me to his own rooms and shut the door; and when he called me his poor Nan, I pushed him away, and said I wanted none of his pity, I could not have thought it of him.

"You do not think it now," he said; and as I looked up into his clear eyes I was ashamed of myself, and could only murmur, what could I think when I saw him sitting there aiding in their cruel manœuvres,—all for your own sake, too?

"I only sat there because I hoped to help you," he said; and then he bade me remember that they had disclosed nothing of these intentions of theirs in the letters which spoke of an accommodation. If they had done so, he might have left me in Holland with some of the English ladies so as to be out of reach; but the scheme had only been propounded to him on the previous morning. I asked why he had not refused it at once, and he pointed out that it was not for him to disclose my secret attachment, even had it been expedient so to do. All that he had been able to do was to declare that the whole must depend on my free consent. "And," he said, with a smile, "methought thereby I had done enough for our Nan, who has no weak will unless by violence she overstrain it."

I felt rebuked as well as reassured and strengthened, and he again assured me that I was safe so long as he

lived from being pressed into any marriage contract displeasing to me.

"But I am promised to M. Darpent," was my cry. "Why did you hinder me from saying so?"

"Have you not lived long enough in France to know that it would go for nothing, or only make matters worse?" he said. "Solivet would not heed your promise more than the wind that blows, except that he might visit it upon Darpent."

"You promised to persuade my mother," I said. "She at least knows how things go in England. Besides, she brought him here constantly. Whenever she was frightened there was a cry for Darpent."

Eustace, however, thought my mother ought to know that my word was given; and we told her in private the full truth, with the full approbation of my brother, the head of the family, and he reminded her that at home such a marriage would be by no means unsuitable. Poor mother! she was very angry with us both. She had become so entirely imbued with her native French notions that she considered the word of a demoiselle utterly worthless, and not to be considered. As to my having encouraged Avocat Darpent, *une créature comme ça*, she would as soon have expected to be told that I had encouraged her valet La Pierre! She was chiefly enraged with me, but her great desire was that I should not be mad enough, as she said, to let it be known that I

had done anything so outrageous as to pass my word to any young man, above all to one of inferior birth. It would destroy my reputation for ever, and ruin all the chance of my marriage.

Above all, she desired that it should be concealed from Solivet. She was a prudent woman, that poor mother of mine, and she was afraid of her son's chastising what she called presumption, and thus embroiling himself with the Parliament people. I said that Solivet had no right over me, and that I had no desire to tell him, though I had felt that she was my mother and ought to be warned that I never would be given to any man save Clément Darpent; and Eustace said that though he regretted the putting himself in opposition to my mother, he should consider it as a sin to endeavour to make me marry one man, while I loved another to whom I was plighted. But he said that there was no need to press the affair, and that he would put a stop to Darpent's frequenting the house, since it only grieved my mother and might bring him into danger. He would, as my mother wished, keep our attachment as a secret, and would at present take no steps if I were unmolested.

In private Eustace showed me that this was all he could do, and counselled me to put forward no plea, but to persist in my simple refusal, lest I should involve Clément Darpent in danger. Had not Solivet ground his teeth and said order should be taken if he could believe

his sister capable of any unworthy attachment? "And remember," said Eustace, "Darpent is not in good odour with either party, and there is such a place as the Bastille."

I asked almost in despair if he saw any end to it, or any hope, to which he said there always was hope. If our King succeeded in regaining his crown we could go home, and we both believed that Clément would gladly join us there and become one of us. For the present, Eustace said, I must be patient. Nobody could hinder him from seeing Darpent, and he could make him understand how it all was, and how he must accept the ungrateful rebuffs that he had received from my mother.

No one can tell what that dear brother was to me then. He replied in my name and his own to M. de Poligny, who was altogether at a loss to understand that any reasonable brother should attend to the views of a young girl, when such a satisfactory *parti* as his son was offered, even though the boy was at least six years younger than I was; and as my mother and Solivet did not fail to set before me, there was no danger of his turning out like that wretch d'Aubépine, as he was a gentle, well-conducted, dull boy, whom I could govern with a silken thread if I only took the trouble to let him adore me. I thanked them, and said that was not exactly my idea of wedded life; and they groaned at my folly.

However, it turned out that M. de Poligny really

wished his little Chevalier to finish his education before being married, and had only hastened his proposals because he wished to prevent the suit from coming up to be pleaded, and so it was agreed that the matter should stand over till this precious suitor of mine should have mastered his accidence and grown a little hair on his lip. I believe my mother had such a wholesome dread of me, especially when backed by my own true English brother, that she was glad to defer the tug of war. And as the *procès* was thus again deferred, I think she hoped that my brother would have no excuse for intercourse with the Darpents. She had entirely broken off with them, and had moreover made poor old Sir Francis and Lady Ommaney leave the Hôtel de Nidemerle, all in politeness as they told us, but as the house was not her own, I should have found it very hard to forgive their expulsion had I been Margaret.

As for me, my mother now watched over me like any other lady of her nation. She resorted far less to Queen Henrietta than formerly, and always took me with her whenever she went, putting an end now, in my twenty-fourth year, to the freedom I had enjoyed all my life. She did not much like leaving me alone with Eustace, and if it had not been for going to church on Sunday, I should never have gone out with him. He was not strong enough now to go to prayers daily at Sir Richard Browne's chapel, but he never failed that summer to take me thither on a

Sunday, though he held that it would be dishonourable to let this be a way for any other meetings.

My mother had become devout, as the French say. She wore only black, went much more to church, always leaving me in the charge of Madame Croquelebois, whom she borrowed from the d'Aubépines for the purpose, and she set all she could in train for the conversion of my brother and myself. There was the Abbé Walter Montagu, Lord Mandeville's brother, and one or two others, who had despaired of our Church and joined hers, and she was always inviting them and setting them to argue with us. Indeed, she declared that one chief reason of her desiring this wedding for me was that it would bring me within the fold of the true Church. They told us that our delusion, as they called our Church, was dead; that the Presbyterians and Fifth Monarchy men and all their rabble had stifled the last remnant of life that had been left in her; that the Episcopacy, even if we scouted the Nag's Head fable, was perishing away, and that England was like Holland or the Palatinate. But Eustace smiled gravely at them, and asked whether the Church had been dead when the Roman Emperors, or the heretic Arians, persecuted her, and said that he knew that, even if he never should see it, she would revive brighter and purer than ever—as indeed it has been given to us to behold. That dear brother, he was so unlike the Calvinists, and held so much in common with the French Church,

that the priests always thought they were converting him; but he stood all the firmer for knowing what was truly Catholic. Of course it was no wonder that as Walter Montagu, like all my Lord Mandeville's sons, had been bred a Puritan, he should have been amazed to perceive that the Roman Catholics were not all that they had been painted, and should find rest in the truths that had been hidden from him; but with us it was quite otherwise, having ever known the best alike of ours and of theirs. The same thing was going on at the Louvre.

Queen Henrietta was bent on converting her son, the Duke of Gloucester. He was a dear good lad of twelve years old, who had just been permitted to join her. I think the pleasantest times I had at all in those days were with him. He clung to us because I had known and loved his sweet sister, the Lady Elizabeth, who had been his companion in his imprisonment, and though he seldom spoke of her it was easy to see that the living with her had left a strong mark on his whole character.

I knew that Eustace had seen the Darpents and made Clément understand that I was faithful, and that he was to believe nothing that he heard of me, except through my brother himself. That helped me to some patience; and I believe poor Clément was so much amazed that his addresses should be tolerated by M. le Baron de Ribau-mont that he was quite ready to endure any suspense.

There were most tremendous disturbances going on

all the time out of doors. Wonderful stories came to us of a fearful uproar in the Parliament between the Princes and the Coadjutor de Gondy, when the Duke of Rochefoucauld got the Coadjutor between two folding-doors, let down the iron bar of them on his neck, and was as nearly as possible the death of him. Then there was a plot for murdering the Prince of Condé in the streets, said to be got up by the Queen-Regent herself, after consulting one of her priests, who told her that she might regard the Prince as an enemy of the State, and that she might lawfully rid herself of him by private means when a public execution was inexpedient. A fine religion that! as I told my mother when M. d'Aubépine came in foaming at the mouth about it; though Eustace would have persuaded me that it was not just to measure a whole Church by one priest. The Prince fortified his house, and lived like a man in a state of siege for some time, and then went off to Chantilly, taking d'Aubépine with him—and every one said a new *Fronde* was beginning, for the Queen-Regent was furious with the Princes, and determined to have Cardinal Mazarin back, and the Prince was equally resolved to keep him out, while as to the Parliament, I had no patience with it; it went on shilly-shallying between the two, and had no substance to do anything but hang on to some selfish Court party.

There were a few who understood their real interests, like the old Premier-President Mathieu Molé, and these

hoped that by standing between the two parties they might get the only right thing done, namely, to convoke the States-General, which is what really answers to our own English Parliament. People could do things then in Paris they never dream of now ; and Clément Darpent worked hard, getting up meetings among the younger counsellors and advocates, and some of the magistrates, where they made speeches about constitutional liberty, and talked about Cicero, who was always Clément's favourite hero. My brother went to hear him sometimes, and said he had a great gift of eloquence, but that he was embarked on a very dangerous course. Moreover, M. Darpent had been chosen as a deputy of the Town Council at the Hôtel de Ville. This council consisted of the mayor and *échevins*, as they called them, who were something like our aldermen, all the parish priests, deputies from the trades, and from all the sixteen quarters of the city, and more besides. They had the management of the affairs of the city in their hands, and Clément Darpent, owning a house, and being respected by the respectable citizens of his department of St. Antoine, was chosen to represent it. Thus he felt himself of use, which always rejoiced him. As to me, I only saw him once that whole autumn, and then I met him by accident as I was walking with Eustace and Margaret in the Cours de la Reine.¹

¹ The Champs-Élysées.

We were in high spirits, for our own King had marched into England while Cromwell was beating the covenanting rogues in Scotland, and Eustace was walking and riding out every day to persuade himself that he was in perfect health and fit to join his standard. That dear brother had promised that if he went to England I should come with him, and be left with old Mrs. Merrycourt, Harry's mother, till Clément could come for me. Then Eustace, with his own lands again, could marry his Millicent, and throw over the Dutchman's hoards, and thus we were full to the brim of joyous plans, and were walking out in the long avenue discussing them most gladly together, when, to add to our delight, Clément met us in his sober lawyer's suit, which became him so well, coming home from a consultation.

The Queen-Regent had promised to convoke the States-General, and he explained to us both how all would come right there. The *bourgeois* element from all the Parliaments of the provinces would be strong enough to make a beginning towards controlling the *noblesse*, divided as it was, and at feud with the Crown. Some of the clergy at least would be on their side, and if the *noblesse* would bear part of the burthens of the State, and it could be established that taxes should not be imposed without the consent of the people, and that offices should not be sold, all would be well for the country. Meg herself took fire, and began to hope that a new state of things would begin

in which she might do some good to those unfortunate peasants of her son's who weighed so heavily on her tender heart. Eustace told him he would be another Simon de Montfort, only not a rebel. No; he was determined to succeed by moral force, and so was his whole party (at least he thought so). They, by their steady loyalty, would teach the young King and his mother how to choose between them and the two selfish factions who were ready to fight with the King himself, provided it was also against a Condé or a Mazarin.

It looked very beautiful indeed. I was roused from my selfish ill-humour, felt what my Clément was worth, and went heart and soul into the matter, and we all four were just as happy over these hopes as if we had not seen how things had turned out at home, and that no one, either Kings or Parliaments, or nobility either, know where to stop; but that if you do not get an absolute tyrant, you run the risk of a Long Parliament, a ruling army, a 30th of January, and a Lord Protector. But we were all young and hopeful still, and that straight walk in the Cours de la Reine was a paradise to some of us, if a fool's paradise. For look you! in these great States-General, who but Clément Darpent the eloquent would make speeches, and win honours that would give him a right to rewards far higher than the hand of a poor exiled maiden, if I were still an exile? Though he declared that I had been his inspiration, and helped to brace him for the struggle, and

far more truly, that my dear brother had shown him what a nobleman, bred under English law, could be, when neither ground down by the Crown, nor forced to do nothing but trample on his vassals.

And Meg began to hope for her Gaspard. She told how the young King was fond of him, and really seemed fired by some emulation at finding that a boy so much younger than himself knew more than he did. Our boy was reading Virgil and Plutarch's lives. He told the stories to the young King, who delighted to listen, though the Duke of Anjou thought everything dull except cards, tennis, and gossip. The King was even beginning to read to himself. "And," said Clément, when he heard it, "let him be fired with the example of Agis or Clomenes, and what may he not do for France?" Oh yes! we were very happy, though we talked of hardly anything but politics. It was the last happy day we were to have for a good while to come.

CHAPTER X.

THE BŒUF GRAS.

(Annora's Narrative.)

I SAID it was a fool's paradise, and it did not last long. The Queen-Regent had a convenient fashion of making nothing of her promises. She did not think base burghers and lawyers human creatures towards whom honour was necessary, and she naturally expected the States-General to act our Long Parliament over again.

It seems that Kings of France come of age at fourteen; and on the day that young Louis was thirteen he was declared to be major, and his mother ceased to be Regent, though she managed everything just as much as if she had still written Anne R. at the end of all the State papers. The advantage to the Court was that no promises or engagements made in his minority were considered to be binding. And so the whole matter of the States-General went to the wall.

There was a magnificent ceremony at the Parliament House, the old hall of the Augustins. The little King

held a bed of justice, upon a couch under a purple velvet canopy, with all his grandees round him. I would not go to see it, I thought it a wicked shame to set up a poor boy to break all the solemn pledges made in his name, and I knew it was the downfall of Clément's hopes ; but Meg went in her Princess's suite, and I had her account of it, the King looking very handsome with his long fair hair, and bowing right and left, with such a dignity and grace that no one saw what a little bit of a fellow he really was. Poor child ! the best thing they could have taught him would have been to worship his God and love his people, instead of worshipping and loving no one but himself. Of course Meg saw nothing so plainly as how beautiful her little Marquis looked among the attendant young nobles, and I must own that he was a very fine fellow, and wonderfully little spoiled considering the sort of folk with whom he lived. On that ceremonial day there came doleful tidings to us. Worcester had been the scene of a massacre rather than a fight, and my brother was in despair and misery at not having been there—as if his single arm could have retrieved the day !—thinking shame of himself for resting at home while sword and block were busy with our friends, and no one knew where the King was. I know not whether it were the daunting of his hopes or the first beginning of the winter cold ; but from that time he began to decline from the strength he had gained while

I had him to myself in Holland, free from all pressing cares.

However, he still rode out in attendance on the Duke of Gloucester, who always preferred him to any other of the gentlemen who waited on the Queen. One evening in October he stayed out so late that we had begun to be anxious at his being thus exposed to the air after sunset, when he came up to our *salon* in high spirits, telling us that he had been returning with the Duke from a ride on the Amiens Road when they saw some altercation going on at the barriers between the guard and a gentleman on horseback, shabby and travel-stained, whom they seemed unwilling to admit. For the Parisians, who always worship success and trample on misfortune, had, since the disaster at Worcester, shown themselves weary of receiving so many unlucky cavaliers, and were sometimes scantily civil. The stranger, as he saw the others come up, called out: "Ha, Walwyn, is it you? You'll give your word for me that the Chevalier Stuart is an honest fellow of your acquaintance, though somewhat out at elbows, like other poor beggars."

And then Eustace saw that it was the King, sun-burnt, thin, and ill-clad, grown from a lad to a man, but with his black eyes glittering gaily through all, as no one's ever did glitter save King Charles's. He gave his word, and passed him through without divulging who he was, since it would not have been well to have had all

the streets turn out to gaze on him in his present trim, having ridden on just as he crossed from Brighthelmstone. The two brothers did not know one another, not having met since Prince Henry was a mere infant of four or five years old; and Eustace said he found the little fellow drawing himself up, and riding somewhat in advance, in some princely amazement that so shabby a stranger should join his company so familiarly and without any check from his companion.

The King began to ask for his mother, and then, at a sign and hint from Eustace, called out:

“What! Harry, hast not a word for thy poor¹ battered elder brother?”

And the boy's face, as he turned, was a sight to see, as Eustace told us.

He had left Queen Henrietta embracing her son in tears of joy for his safe return, and very thankful we were, though it did but take our first reception at the Louvre to see that though the King was as good-humoured, gracious, and merry as ever, he was not changed for the better by all he had gone through. He had left the boy behind him, and now seemed like a much older man, who only laughed and got what amusement he could out of a world where he believed in nothing noble nor good, and looked forward to nothing.

The old ladies said he had grown like his grandfather, Henri IV., and when this was repeated Eustace

shook his head, and told Meg that he feared it was in one way true enough, and Meg, who always hoped, bade us remember how many years the Grand Monarque had to dally away before he became the preserver and peacemaker of France.

However, even Meg, who had always let the King be like an old playfellow with her, was obliged to draw back now, and keep him at the most formal distance. I never had any trouble with him. I do not think he liked me; indeed I once heard of his saying that I always looked like a wild cat that had got into the *salon* by mistake, and was always longing to scratch and fly. He would be quite willing to set me to defend a castle, but for the rest——

It was not he whom I wished to scratch—at least as long as he let me alone—but M. de Poligny, who took to paying me the most assiduous court wherever I went, for his little schoolboy of a son, till I was almost beside myself with fear that Clément Darpent might believe some false report about me.

And then spring was coming on, and Eustace as yet made no sign of going to Holland. He only told me to be patient, and patience was becoming absolutely intolerable to my temper. Meantime, we heard that the First President, Mathieu de Molé, who had some time before been nominated Keeper of the Seals, but had never exercised the functions of the office, had nominated M. Darpent to be his principal secretary at Paris, remaining

there and undertaking his correspondence when he was with the Court. Clément had been recommended for this office by his brother-in-law, one of the Gneffiers du Roi, who was always trying to mediate between the parties. Molé was thoroughly upright and disinterested, and he had begged Clément to undertake the work as the one honest man whom he could trust, and Clément had such an esteem for him that he felt bound to do anything he could to assist him, in his true loyalty.

"I shall tell the King the truth," said the good old man, "and take the consequences."

And his being in office gave another hope for better counsels and the States-General.

So Lady Ommaney told me, but I was anxious and dissatisfied. I had liked Clément better when he had refused to purchase an office, and stood aloof from all the suite of the Court. She soothed me as best she could, and, nodding her head a little, evidently was hatching a scheme.

Now the children had a great desire to see the procession in the Mid-Lent week. It is after what we call Mothering Sunday—when the prettiest little boy they can find in Paris rides through the streets on the largest white ox. Now the lodgings whither Sir Francis and Lady Ommaney had betaken themselves, when my mother had, so to speak, turned them out, had a balcony with an excellent view all along the *quais*, and thither the dear old lady invited Meg, Madame d'Aubépine, and me, to bring Gaspard, with

Maurice and Armantine; and I saw by her face that the *bœuf gras* was not all that there was for me to see.

We went early in the day, when the streets were still not overmuch crowded, and we climbed up, up to the fifth story, where the good old lady contrived to make the single room her means could afford look as dainty as her bower at home, though she swept it with her own delicate white hands. There was an engraving of the blessed Martyr over the chimney-piece, the same that is in the *Eikon Basilike*, with the ray of light coming down into his eye, the heavenly crown awaiting him, the world spurned at his feet, and the weighted palm-tree with *Crescit sub pondere virtus*. And Sir Francis' good old battle-sword and pistols hung under it. It made me feel quite at home, and we tried to make the children enter into the meaning of the point. At least Meg did, and I think she succeeded with her son, who had a good deal of the true Ribaumont in him, and whom they could not spoil even by all the misrule that went on at Court whenever the Queen was out of sight. He stood thoughtful by the picture while the little d'Aubépines were dancing in and out of the balcony, shrieking about every figure they saw passing in the road below.

Sir Francis, after receiving us, had gone out, as he said, to see what was going on, but I think he removed himself in order to leave us more at our ease. By and by there was a knock at the door, and who should come in

but M. Darpent, leading a little boy of five or six years old, his nephew, he said, whom Lady Ommaney had permitted him to bring to see the sight.

I heard afterwards that it was pretty to see the different ways of the children, and how Maurice d'Aubépine drew himself up, put on his hat, laid his hand on his ridiculous little sword, and insisted that the little Clément Verdon should stand behind him and his sister, where he could see nothing, while Gaspard de Nidemerle, with an emphatic "*Moi, je suis gentilhomme*," put the stranger before himself and looked over his head, as he could easily do, being two or three years older.

Well, I lost my chance; I never saw the great ox wreathed with flowers, nor the little boy on his back, nor all the butchers with their cleavers round him, nor the procession of the trades, the fishwomen, *dames des halles*, as they called them, all in their white caps and short petticoats, singing a ballad in honour of the Duke of Beaufort, the faggot-carriers with sticks, the carpenters with tools, all yelling out songs in execration of Cardinal Mazarin, who had actually entered France with an army, and vituperating with equal virulence the Big Beard, as they called the President Molé.

They told me the sight had been wonderful, but what was that to me when Clément Darpent stood before me? He looked thin and worn, and almost doubtful how to address me; but Lady Ommaney said, in her hearty way:

"Come, come, young folks, you have enough to say to one another. Sit down there and leave the ox to the children and us old folks in our second childhood. You believe an old woman now, M. Darpent?"

"You never distrusted me?" I demanded.

He said he had never distrusted my heart, but that he had heard at all hands of the arrangement with M. de Poligny, whose lawyer had actually stopped proceedings on that account. My brother had indeed assured him that he did not mean to consent; and he ought, he allowed, to have rested satisfied with that assurance, but — He faltered a little, which made me angry. The truth was that some cruel person had spoken to him as if my dear Eustace and his protection would soon be removed; and while Solivet was at hand, Eustace, in his caution, had refrained from such intercourse with Clément as could excite suspicion. Besides, he was a good deal away at St. Germain with the Duke. All this I did not understand. I was vexed with Clément for having seemed to doubt us, and I did not refrain from showing my annoyance that he should have accepted any kind of office in the rotten French State. It seemed to me a fall from his dignity. On this he told me that it was not purchased, and it was serving under a true and loyal man, whom he felt bound to support. If any one *could* steer between the Prince and the Cardinal, and bring some guarantee for the people out of the confusion, it was the Keeper of

the Seals, the head of the only party who cared more for the good of the country than their private malice and hatred.

"And," he said diffidently, "if under M. Molé's patronage, the steps could be gained without loss of honour or principle, you remember that there is a *noblesse de la robe*, which might remove some of Madame de Ribau-mont's objections, though I do not presume to compare it with the blood of the Crusaders.

I am ashamed to say that I answered, "I should think not!" and then I am afraid I reproached him for bartering the glorious independence that had once rendered him far more than noble, for the mere tinsel show of rank that all alike thought despicable. How I hate myself when I recall that I told him that if he had done so for my sake he had made a mistake; and as for loyalty rallying round the French Crown, I believed in no such thing; they were all alike, and cared for nothing but their ambitions and their hatreds.

Before anything had been said to soften these words—while he was still standing grave and stiff, like one struck by a blow—in came the others from the window. Meg, in fact, could not keep Cécile d'Aubépine back any longer from hindering such shocking impropriety as our *tête-à-tête*. We overheard her saving her little girl from corruption by a frightful French fib that the gentleman in black was Mademoiselle de Ribau-mont's English priest.

I am sure our parting need have excited no suspicions.

We were cold and grave and ceremonious as Queen Anne of Austria herself, and poor Lady Ommaney looked from one to the other of us in perplexity.

I went home between wrath and shame. I knew I had insulted Clement, and I was, really mortified and angry that he should have accepted this French promotion instead of fleeing with us, and embracing our religion. I hated all the French politics together a great deal too much to have any comprehension of the patriotism that made him desire to support the only honest and loyal party, hopeless as it was. I could not tell Meg about our quarrel; I was glad Eustace was away at the English ambassador's. I felt as if one Frenchman was as good, or as bad, as another, and I was more gracious to M. de Poligny than ever I had been before that evening.

My mother had a reception in honour of its being Mid-Lent week. Solivet was there; and, for a wonder, both the d'Aubépines, for the Count had come home suddenly with a message from the Prince of Condé to the Duke of Orleans.

CHAPTER XI.

MADAME'S OPPORTUNITY.

(Annora's Narrative.)

THE Prince of Condé and Cardinal Mazarin were in arms against one another. The Queen and her son were devoted to Mazarin. The loyal folk in Paris held to the King, and were fain to swallow the Cardinal because Condé was in open rebellion. Monsieur was trying to hold the balance with the help of the Parliament, but was too great an ass to do any such thing. The mob was against everybody, chiefly against the Cardinal, and the brutal ruffians of the Prince's following lurked about, bullying every one who gave them umbrage, with some hope of terrifying the Parliament magistrates into siding with them.

It was therefore no great surprise to Eustace and Sir Francis Ommaney the next evening, when they were coming back on foot from the Louvre, to hear a scuffle in one of the side streets.

They saw in a moment half a dozen fellows with

cudgels falling on a figure in black, who vainly struggled to defend himself with a little thin walking rapier. Their English blood was up in a moment, and they rushed to the defence, seeing at that moment two masked figures and hearing them egging on their bravoos with "*Holà*, there! At him! Teach him to look at a lady of rank."

The little rapier had been broken. A heavy blow had made the victim's arm fall, he had been tripped up, and the rascals were still belabouring him, when Eustace and Sir Francis sprang in among them, crying, "Hold, cowardly rascals!" striking to the right and left, though with the flat of their swords, of which they were perfect masters, for even in their wrath they remembered that these rogues were only tools. And no doubt they were not recognised in the twilight, for one of the masked gentlemen exclaimed :

"Stop, sir! this is not a matter for gentlemen. This is the way we punish the insolence of fellows whose muddy blood would taint the swords of a noble."

At the same moment Eustace saw that the victim, who had begun to raise himself, was actually Clément Darpent. He knew, too, the voice from the mask, and, in hot wrath, exclaimed :

"Solivet, you make me regret that you are my brother, and that I cannot punish such a cowardly outrage."

"But I am no brother of yours!" cried d'Aubépine, flying at him. "Thus I treat all who dare term me coward."

Eustace, far taller and more expert in fence, as well as with strength of arm that all his ill-health had not destroyed, parried the thrust so as to strike the sword out of d'Aubépine's hand, and then said:

"Go home, Monsieur. Thank your relationship to my sister that I punish you no further, and learn that to use other men's arms to strike the defenceless is a stain upon nobility."

And as the wretched little Count slunk away he added:

"Solivet, I had thought better things of you."

To which Solivet responded, with the pretension derived from his few years of seniority:

"Bah! brother, you do not understand, half a foreigner as you are. This was the only way left to me to protect my sister from the insults your English folly had brought on her."

Eustace made no answer. He could not speak, for the exertion and shock had been too much for him. His mouth was filled with blood. They were all about him in an instant then, Solivet and Darpent both in horror, each feeling that he might in a manner have been the cause of that bleeding, which might in a moment be fatal. Eustace himself knew best what to do, and sat down on the step leaning against Sir Francis, so as not to add to the danger.

The fray had been undisturbed. In that delectable city people held aloof from such things instead of stopping them, but a doctor suddenly appeared on the scene, "attracted like a vulture," as Sir Francis said; and they had some ado to prevent him from unbuttoning Eustace's doublet to search for a wound before they could make him understand what had really happened. They obtained a *fiacre*, and Eustace was placed in it. In this condition they brought him home and put him to bed, telling us poor women only that he had interfered in a street fray and over-exerted himself. It was shock enough for us to find all the improvements of a whole year overthrown, as he lay white and still, not daring to speak.

They had agreed on the way home to keep us in ignorance, or at least to let us think that the attack had been made by strangers, simply because of his connection with the Big Beard. Meg's Nicolas was first to tell us that it was M. Darpent whom they had rescued, and that he had called at the porter's lodge on his way home to inquire for M. le Baron, bruised all over, and evidently seriously hurt. And while still trying to disbelieve this, another report arrived through the maidservants that MM. de Solivet and d'Aubépine had soundly cudgelled M. Darpent, and that M. le Baron and M. d'Aubépine had fought a duel on the spot, in which my brother had been wounded.

Meg was nearly as frantic as I was. We could not

speak to Eustace, and Solivet and d'Aubépine, finding themselves known, had both hurried away at peep of day, for it was a serious thing to have nearly killed a man in office; but Meg desired that if Sir Francis called to inquire for my brother we should see him, and she also sent Nicolas to inquire for M. Darpent, who, we heard, was confined to his bed with a broken arm.

Poor Clément! such was his reward for the interview where I had used him so ill, and been so unjust to him. For, as we came to understand, it really was all that wretched little Cécile's fault. She would do anything to please that husband of hers, and she communicated to him that she understood the secret of my resistance to the Poligny match, and had been infinitely shocked at my behaviour at Lady Ommaney's.

The cowardly fellow had hated Clément ever since the baffling of the attempt on Margaret. So he told Solivet, and they united in this attack, with half a dozen of their bravoos, got together for the occasion! We heard the truth of the affair from Sir Francis, and it was well for Solivet that he was out of my reach!

As for my mother, she thought it only an overflow of zeal for the honour of the family, and held it to be my fault that her dear son had been driven to such measures. Nothing was bad enough for the Ommaneys! Nothing would restore my reputation but marrying the little Chevalier at Easter. And in the midst, just as Eustace

was a little better, and there was no excuse for refusing to obey the drag of her chains, Margaret was summoned away to attend on her absurd Princess, who was going to Orléans, by way of keeping the Cardinal's forces out of her father's city.

Margaret had kept things straight. I do not know how it was, but peace always went away with her; and my mother did things she never attempted when the real lady of the house was at home. And yet I might thank my own hasty folly for much of what befell.

Eustace was much better, sitting up in his nightgown by the fire, and ready, as I thought, to talk over everything, and redress my wrongs, or at least comfort the wretchedness that had grown upon me daily since that miserable quarrel with Clément. I poured it all out, and even was mad enough to say it was his fault for delaying so long the journey to the Hague. Clément, who had been well-nigh ready to join us and be a good Protestant, was going back to the old delusions, and taking office under the Government; and even if the bravoes had not killed him, he would be spoilt for any honest Englishwoman; and I might as well take that miserable little schoolboy, which I supposed was all my brother wished. Then the estate would be safe enough.

Eustace could only assure me that the delay was as grievous to him as to me. Indeed, as I could see in a more reasonable mood, he had been unable to get from

Ribaumont the moneys needful for the journey, the steward not venturing to send them while the roads were so unsafe ; but when he begged me to have patience, it seemed to sting my headstrong temper, and I broke out in some such words as these : “ Patience ! Patience ! I am sick of it. Thanks to your patience, I have lost Clément. They have all but murdered him ! And for yourself, you had better take care Millicent van Hunker does not think that such patience is only too easy when she has neither wealth nor beauty left ! ”

“ Hush, Annora,” he answered, with authority and severity in his tone, but not half what I deserved ; “ there is great excuse for you, but I cannot permit such things to be said.”

Here Tryphena came in and scolded me for making him talk ; I saw how flushed he was, and became somewhat frightened. They sent me away, and oh ! how long it was ere I was allowed to see him again ! For in the morning, after a night of repenting and grieving over my heat, and longing to apologise for having reproached him for the delay which was as grievous to him as to me, the first thing I heard was that M. le Baron was much worse ; he had had a night of fever ; there was more bleeding, and much difficulty of breathing. My mother was with him, and I was on no account to be admitted.

And when I came out of my room, there sat Madame Croquelbois, who had been sent for from the Hôtel

d'Aubépine to keep guard over me, day and night; for she was lodged in that cabinet of my sister's into which my room opened, and my door on the other side was locked. It was an insult, for which the excuse was my interview with Clément. It made me hot and indignant enough, but there was yet a further purpose in it.

The next thing was to send for a certain Frère Allonville, a man who had been a doctor before he was converted and became a Dominican friar, and who still practised, and was said to do cures by miracle. I know this, that it would have been a miracle if his treatment had cured my brother, for the first thing he did was to bleed him, the very thing that Dr. Dirkius had always told us was the sure way to kill him, when he was losing so much blood already. Then the friar turned out Tryphena, on the plea that he must have a nurse who understood his language. As if poor Tryphena, after living thirteen years in France, could not understand the tongue quite enough for any purpose, and as if she did not know better how to take care of Eustace than any one else! But of course the language was not the real reason that she was shut out, and kept under guard, as it were, just as much as I was, while a Sister of Charity was brought in to act as my brother's nurse, under my mother, who, look you, never had been nurse at all, and always fainted at any critical moment.

Assuredly I knew why they were thus isolating my

brother from all of us. I heard steps go upstairs, not only of the Dominican quack doctor, but of the Abbé Montagu, who had been previously sent to convert us. The good old Bonchamp, who had a conscience, was away at St. Germain with Gaspard de Nidemerle, and I—I had no one to appeal to when I knew they were harassing the very life out of my dearest, dearest brother, by trying to make him false to the Church and the faith he had fought for. I could do nothing—I was a prisoner; all by my own fault too; for they would have had no such opportunity had I not been so unguarded towards my brother. When I did meet my mother it chafed me beyond all bearing to see her devout air of resignation and piety. Her dear son was, alas! in the utmost danger, but his dispositions were good, and she trusted to see him in the bosom of the true Church, and that would be a consolation, even if he were not raised up by a miracle, which would convince even me. Poor woman! I believe she really did expect that his conversion would be followed by a miraculous recovery. I told her she was killing him—and well! I don't know what I said, but I think I frightened her, for she sent Mr. Walter Montagu to see what he could do with me.

I told him I wondered he was not ashamed of such a conversion, supposing he made it, which I was sure he would not as long as my brother retained his senses.

To which he answered that Heaven was merciful, and

that so long as one was in communion with the true Church there was power to be redeemed in the next world, if not in this.

"A sorry way of squeezing into Heaven," I said; and then he began arguing, as he had done a hundred times before, on the blessing and rest he had found in the Church, after renouncing his errors. And no wonder, for it is well known that my Lord Mandeville brought up his family to be mere Puritans. However, I said: "Look you here, Mr. Montagu; if my brother, Lord Walwyn, gave himself to you of deliberate mind, with full health and faculties, you might think him a gain indeed. Or if you like it better, he would have a claim to the promises of your Church; but if you merely take advantage of the weakness of a man at the point of death to make him seem a traitor to his whole life, why, then, I should say you trusted, more than I do, to what you call Divine promises."

He told me—as they always do—that I knew nothing about it, and that he should pray for me. But I had some trust that his English blood would be guilty of no foul play. I was much more afraid of the Dominican; only one good thing was that the man was not a priest. So went by Good Friday and Easter Eve. They would not let me go to church for fear I should speak to any one. Madame Croquelebois and my mother's old smirking tire-woman, Bellote, took turns to mount guard over

me. I heard worse and worse accounts of my dear brother's bodily state, but I had one comfort. One of the servants secretly handed Tryphena this little note addressed to me, in feeble straggling characters:—

“Do what they may to me my will does not consent. Pray for me. If word were taken to the K. E. W. and R.”

It was some comfort that I should have that to prove what my brother was to the last. It made me able to weep and pray—pray as I had never prayed before—all that night and that strange sad Easter morning, when all the bells were ringing, and the people flocking to the churches, and I sat cut off from them all in my chamber, watching, watching in dread of sounds that might tell me that my dearest and only brother, my one hope, was taken from me, body and soul, and by my fault, in great part.

Oh! what a day it was, as time went on. Madame Croquelebois went to high mass, and Bellote remained in charge. I was, you understand, a prisoner at large. Provided some one was attending me, I went into any room in the house save the only one where I cared to be. And I was sitting in the *salon*, with my Bible and Prayer-book before me—not reading, I fear me, but at any rate attesting my religion, when there came up a message that Son Altesse Royale, the Duke of Gloucester, requested to be admitted to see Mademoiselle de Ribaumont.

Nobody made any question about admitting a Royal

Highness, so up he came, the dear boy, with his bright hazel eyes like his father's, and his dark shining curls on his neck. He had missed me at the ambassador's chapel, and being sure, from my absence, that my brother must be very ill indeed, he had come himself to inquire. He could as yet speak little French, and not understanding what they told him at the door, he had begged to see me.

It did not take long to tell him all, for Bellote did not understand English; I showed him the note, and he stood considering. He was not like his brothers, he had not lived in vain all those years with his sister Elizabeth in captivity, for there was a grave manliness about him though he was only thirteen. He said: "Do you think Lord Walwyn would see me? I am used to be with a sick person."

Eagerly I sent up word. I knew my mother would never refuse entrance to royal blood; nor did she. She sent word that the Duke would do her son only too much honour by thus troubling himself. I did not miss the chance of marshalling him upstairs, and gaining one sight of my brother—oh! so sadly wasted in these few days, his cheeks flushed, his breath labouring, his eyes worn and sleepless, as he lay, raised high on his pillows. He looked up with pleasure into the Duke's face. My mother was making speeches and ceremonies; but after bowing in reply, the Duke, holding Eustace's hand, leant

over him and said : " Can I do anything for you ? Shall I send for a chaplain ? "

Eustace's eye brightened, and he answered in a voice so faint that the Prince only heard by bending over him :

" An order from the King for some one to remain— Then I need not be ever watching—— "

" I shall wait till he comes, " said the Prince ; and Eustace gave *such* a look of thankfulness, and pressed the hand that had been laid in his.

The Duke, with great politeness, asked permission of my mother to write a billet to his brother, with a report of Lord Walwyn, at the writing-table in the room. He wrote two—one to the King, another to the chaplain, Dr. Hargood, bidding him obtain orders from King Charles to remain with Lord Walwyn ; and he despatched them by the gentleman who had followed him, asking permission of my mother to remain a little while with my lord.

Poor mother ! she could not refuse, and she did, after all, love her son enough to be relieved, as an air of rest and confidence stole over his features, as the princely boy sat down by him, begging that he might spare some one fatigue while he was there. She sent me away, but would not go herself ; and I heard afterwards that the Duke sat very still, seldom speaking. Once Eustace asked him if he had his Book of Common Prayer, for his own had been put out of his reach.

"This is my sister's," said the Duke, taking out a little worn velvet book. "Shall I read you her favourite Psalm?"

He read in a low gentle voice, trained by his ministry to his sweet sister. He read the Easter Epistle and Gospel too; and at last Eustace, relaxing the weary watch and guard of those dreadful days, dropped into a calm sleep.

If a miracle of recovery could be said to have been wrought, surely it was by Duke Henry of Gloucester.

Long and patiently the boy sat there; for, as it turned out, the King was in the Cours de la Reine playing at bowls, and it was long before he could be found, and when Dr. Hargood brought it at last the Prince had actually watched his friend for four hours. He might well say he had been trained in waiting! And he himself gave the *bouillon*, when Eustace awoke without the red flush, and with softer breathing!

The King had actually done more than the Duke had asked; for he had not only given orders that the chaplain should come, and, if desired, remain with Lord Walwyn, but he had also sent the Queen's physician, the most skilful man at hand, to oust the Dominican. We heard that he had sworn that it was as bad as being in a Scotch conventicle to have cowls and hoods creeping about your bed before you were dead, and that Harry had routed them like a very St. George.

CHAPTER XII.

THE NEW MAID OF ORLÉANS.

(Margaret's Narrative.)

I WAS summoned to the Luxembourg Palace on the Tuesday in Holy Week, the 25th of March. My dear brother was then apparently much better, and gaining ground after the attack of hæmorrhage caused by his exertions to save M. Darpent from the violence of his assailants.

He did not appear to need me, since he could not venture to talk more than a few words at a time; and, besides, my year's absence had left me in such arrears of waiting that I could not ask for leave of absence without weighty grounds. My mother was greatly displeased with me for not having cut short the interview between Darpent and Annora, although it seemed to have served her purpose by embroiling them effectually; but she could not overlook so great an impropriety; and I confess that I was not sorry to avoid her continual entreaties to me to give up all intercourse alike with the Darpents and

Ommaneys, and all our English friends. I had satisfied myself that M. Darpent was in no danger, and I was willing to let the matter blow over, since Lady Ommaney, though imprudent, had only done a good-natured thing from the English point of view.

I found my Princess in great excitement. Cardinal Mazarin had rejoined the King and Queen, and they were at the head of one army, the Prince of Condé was at the head of another. The Parliament viewed both Cardinal and Prince as rebels, and had set a price upon the Cardinal's head. On the whole, the Prince was the less hated of the two, yet there were scruples on being in direct opposition to the King. The Cardinal de Retz was trying to stir the Duke of Orléans to take what was really his proper place as the young King's uncle, and at the head of the Parliament, to mediate between the parties, stop the civil war, convoke the States-General, and redress grievances. But to move Monsieur was a mere impossibility; he liked to hear of his own power, but whenever anything was to be done that alarmed him, he always was bled, or 'took physic, so as to have an excuse for not interfering.

And now the royal army was approaching Orléans, and Monsieur could not brook that the city, his own appanage, should be taken from him. Yet not only was he unwilling to risk himself, but the Coadjutor and he were alike of opinion that he ought not to leave Paris

and the Parliament. So he had made up his mind to send his daughter, who was only too much charmed to be going anywhere or doing anything exciting, especially if it could be made to turn to the advantage of the Prince of Condé, whom she still dreamt of marrying.

I found her in a state of great importance and delight, exclaiming: "My dear Gildippe, I could not do without you! We shall be in your element. His Royal Highness and M. le Cardinal de Retz have both been breaking my head with instructions, but I remember none of them! I trust to my native wit on the occasion."

We all got into our carriages, a long train of them, at the Luxembourg, with Monsieur looking from the window and waving his farewell to his daughter, and the people called down benedictions on her, though I hardly know what benefit they expected from her enterprise. We had only two officers, six guards, and six Swiss to escort us; but Mademoiselle was always popular, and we were quite safe.

We slept at Chartres, and there met the Duke of Beaufort, who rode by the carriage-window; and by and by, at Etampes, we found 500 light horse of Monsieur's regiment, who all saluted. Mademoiselle was in ecstasies; she insisted on leaving her carriage, and riding at their head, with all the ladies who could sit on horseback; and thus we came to Toury, where were the Duke de Nemours and others of the Prince's party.

My heart was heavy, I hardly knew why, with forebodings about what might be passing at home, or I should have enjoyed the comedy of Mademoiselle's extreme delight in her own importance, and the councils of war held before her, while the Dukes flattered her to the top of her bent, laughed in their sleeve, and went their own way. She made us all get up at break of day to throw ourselves into Orléans, and we actually set out, but we had to move at a foot's pace, because M. de Beaufort had, by accident or design, forgotten to command the escort to be in attendance.

By and by a message was brought by some gentlemen, who told Mademoiselle that the citizens of Orléans had closed their gates and were resolved to admit nobody; that the Keeper of the Seals was on the farther side, demanding entrance for the royal troops; and they were afraid of the disorderly behaviour of any soldiers. They were in a strait between the King and their Duke's daughter, and they proposed to her to go to some neighbouring house and pretend illness until the royal forces should have passed by, when they would gladly admit her.

Mademoiselle was not at all charmed by this proposal, and she answered with spirit: "I shall go straight to Orléans. If they shut the gates I shall not be discouraged. Perseverance will gain the day. If I enter the town my presence will restore the courage of all who

are well affected to His Royal Highness. When persons of my rank expose themselves, the people are terribly animated, and they will not yield to people of small resolution."

So into the carriage she got, taking me with her, and laughing at all who showed any alarm. Message upon message met us, supplicating her not to come on, as she would not be admitted; but her head only went higher and higher, all the more when she heard that the Keeper of the Seals was actually at the gates, demanding entrance in the name of the King.

About eleven o'clock we reached the *Porte Bannière*, and found it closed and barricaded. The guards were called on to open to *Mademoiselle d'Orléans Montpensier*, the daughter of their lord; but all in vain, though she had not a soldier with her, and promised not to bring in either of the Dukes of Nemours or Beaufort.

We waited three hours. *Mademoiselle* became tired of sitting in the carriage, and we went to a little inn, where we had something to eat, and, to our great amusement, the poor, perplexed Governor of the town sent her some sweetmeats, by way, I suppose, of showing his helpless good-will. We then began to walk about the suburbs, and I thought of the Battle of the Herrings and the Maid of Orléans, and wondered which was the gate by which she entered. One of the gentlemen immediately complimented *Mademoiselle* on being a second Maid of Orléans,

and pointed out the gate, called *Le Port de Salut*, as connected with the rescue of the place. We saw the Marquis d'Allins looking out at the window of the guardroom, and Mademoiselle made signs to him to bring her the keys, and let her in, but he replied by his gestures that he could not. The situation was a very strange one. Mademoiselle, with her little suite of ladies, parading along the edge of the moat, vainly trying to obtain admission, while the women, children, and idlers of Orléans were peeping over the ramparts at us, shouting: "*Vive le Roi! Vivent les Princes! Point de Mazarin!*" and Mademoiselle was calling back: "Go to the town hall, call the magistrates, and fetch the keys!" Nobody stirred, and at last we came to another gate, when the guard presented arms, and again Mademoiselle called to the captain to open. With a low bow and a shrug, he replied: "I have no keys."

"Break it down, then," she cried. "You owe more obedience to your master's daughter than to the magistrates."

He bowed.

The scene became more and more absurd; Mademoiselle began to threaten the poor man with arrest.

He bowed.

He should be degraded.

He bowed.

He should be drummed out of the service.

He bowed.

He should be shot.

He bowed.

We were choking with laughter, and trying to persuade her that threats were unworthy; but she said that kindness had no effect, and that she must now use threats, and that she knew she should succeed, for an astrologer had told her that everything she did between this Wednesday and Friday should prosper—she had the prediction in her pocket. By this time we had coasted along the moat till we came to the Loire, where a whole swarm of boatmen, honest fellows in red caps and striped shirts, came up, shouting, “Vive Monsieur!” “Vive Mademoiselle!” and declaring that it was a shame to lock her out of her father’s own town.

She asked them to row her to the water-gate of La Faux, but they answered that there was an old wooden door close by which they could more easily break down. She gave them money and bade them do so, and to encourage them climbed up a steep mound of earth close by all over bushes and briars, while poor Madame de Breauté stood shrieking below, and I scrambled after.

The door was nearly burst in, but it was on the other side of the moat. The water was very low, so two boats were dragged up to serve as a bridge, but they were so much below the top of the ditch that a ladder was put down into one, up which Mademoiselle

dauntlessly mounted, unheeding that one step was broken, and I came after her. This was our escalade of Orléans.

She ordered her guards to return to the place where the carriages had been left, that she might show how fearless she was. The boatmen managed at last to cut out two boards from the lower part of the door. There were two great iron bars above them, but the hole was just big enough to squeeze through, and Mademoiselle was dragged between the splinters by M. de Grammont and a footman. As soon as her head appeared inside the gate the drums beat, there were loud *vivats*, a wooden arm-chair was brought, and Mademoiselle was hoisted on the men's shoulders in it and carried along the street; but she soon had enough of this, caused herself to be set down, and we all joined her, very dirty, rather frightened, and very merry. Drums beat before us, and we arrived at the Hôtel de Ville, where the polite bows and the embarrassed faces of the Governor and the magistrates were a sight worth seeing.

However, Mademoiselle took the command, and they all made their excuses and applied themselves to entertaining her and her suite, as carriages were not admitted, for we were in a manner besieged by the Keeper of the Seals; and in the early morning, at seven o'clock, Mademoiselle had to rise and go through the streets encouraging the magistrates to keep him out.

She was a sort of queen at Orléans, and we formed a little Court. I really think this was the happiest time in her life, while she had a correspondence with the Prince of Condé on the one hand, and her father on the other; and assisted at councils of war outside the gates, as she kept her promise, and admitted none of the leaders of the belligerent parties into the city.

They were stormy councils. At one of these the Dukes of Beaufort and Nemours had a dispute, drew their swords, and were going to attack one another, when Mademoiselle, by entreaties and commands, forced them to lay down their arms.

All this time I had no news from my family. We were in a strange condition. Here was I following Mademoiselle, who represented her father and the neutral party, but was really devoted to the Prince; my son was in attendance on the King, whom we were keeping out of his own city; my mother, brother, and sister were in Paris, which held for the Parliament. My half-brother, Solivet, had repaired to M. de Turenne's army, which was fighting for the King, and my brother-in-law, d'Aubépine, was on the staff of the Prince.

There was scarcely any family that was not divided and broken up in the same way, and it was hard to say why there was all this war and misery, except that there was irreconcilable hatred between the Prince and the Cardinal, and the Queen was determined to cling to the latter.

I knew nothing of what was passing at home till a day or two after Easter Sunday, when one of the gentlemen of the household of the Duke of Orléans, who had come with letters for Mademoiselle, seemed surprised to see me, and on my pressing him for intelligence, he told me that my dear brother was at the point of death. He was quite sure of it, for he had spoken with M. de Poligny, who told him that M. de Ribaumont was daily visited by the Abbé Montagu, was in the best possible dispositions, and would receive the last sacraments of our Church.

I knew not what to believe. All I was sure of was that I must be wanted, and that it would break my heart not to see my dearest brother again. Mademoiselle was a kind mistress, and she consented to my leaving her, and there was no danger in ladies travelling, though a good deal of difficulty in getting horses.

At last, however, I found myself at my own door, and in one moment satisfied myself that my brother was living, and better. My mother was in the *salon*, in conversation with M. de Poligny, who had the good judgment to withdraw.

“Ah! my dear,” she said, “we have had frightful scenes! I had almost gained my dear son’s soul, but alas! it might have been at the cost of his life, and I could not but be weak enough to rejoice when your sister’s obstinacy snatched him from me. After all one is a mother! and the good Abbé says a pure life and

invincible ignorance will merit acceptance ! Besides, the Duke of Gloucester did him the honour to sit an hour by him every day."

I asked for my sister, and heard that she was with him. For, though my mother said poor Annora's ungovernable impetuosity had done him so much harm, nay, nearly killed him, he was now never so tranquil as when she was in his sight, and the English physician, who had been sent by the King himself, declared that his life still depended on his being kept free from all agitation.

"Otherwise," said my mother, "I could bring about the marriage with the little Chevalier. Annora has renounced her disobedient folly, and would make no more resistance ; but M. de Poligny, of course, cannot proceed further till your brother is in condition to settle the property on her."

I asked in wonder whether my sister had consented, but my mother seemed to think that the break with Darpent had settled that matter for ever.

And when I saw my poor Annora, she was altered indeed. The bright colour had left her cheeks, her eyes looked dim and colourless, her voice had lost its fresh defiant ring ; she was gentle, submissive, listless, as if all she cared for in life had gone from her except the power of watching Eustace.

He looked less ill than I had dreaded to see him. I think he felt at rest after the struggle he had undergone to

preserve the faith he really loved. He had never relaxed his guard for a single moment till the Duke of Gloucester had come, fearing that if he ceased his vigilance, that might be done which we felt to be mercy, but which he could not submit to. He always had a calmly resolute will, and he knew now that he must avoid all agitation until he was able to bear it; so he would not ask any questions. He only showed me that he was glad of my return, pointed to Nan, saying: "She has been sorely tried, take care of her," and asked me if I could find out how it fared with Darpent.

It was too late to do anything that evening, and I went to mass as early as I could in the morning, that the streets might be quiet; and when I rose from my knees I was accosted by a Sister of Charity who told me that there was terrible need at the Hôtel Dieu. Men were continually brought in, shockingly injured in the street frays that were constantly taking place, and by the violences of the band of robbers and bravoës with whom the Duke of Orléans surrounded his carriage, and there was exceedingly little help and nursing for them, owing to the absence of the Queen, and of so many of the great ladies who sometimes lavished provisions, comforts, and attendance on the patients.

I had three hours to spare before any one would be up, so I went home, got together all the old linen and provisions I could muster, told my sister where I was

going, and caused my chairmen to carry me to the hospital. The streets were perfectly quiet then, only the bakers' boys running about with their ells of bread, the water-carriers and the faggot-men astir, and 'round the churches a few women hurrying to their prayers, looking about as if half dreading a tumult.

Poor people ! I had never seen the hospital so full, or in so sad a condition. The Sisters and the priests of St. Lazare were doing their utmost, and with them a very few ladies. I had stayed long enough to fear that I must be needed at home when I saw another lady coming to take my place, and recognised Madame Darpent. We met with more eagerness than the good old devout dame usually allowed herself to show, for each accepted the appearance of the other as a token of the improvement of our patients at home. She said her son was nearly well in health, but that his arm was still unserviceable, having been cruelly twisted by the miscreants who had attacked him ; and when I told her that my brother was likewise recovering, she exclaimed :

" Ah, Madame ! I dare not ask it ; but if Madame la Vicomtesse could kindly leave word of the good news as she passes our house, it would be a true charity to my poor son. We have heard sad accounts of the illness of M. de Ribauumont. The servants at the Hôtel de Nidemerle confirmed them, and my son, knowing that M. le Baron was hurt in his behalf, has been devoured with

misery. If Madame could let him know at once it would spare him four or five hours of distress, ere I can leave these poor creatures."

"Perhaps he would like to see me," I said; and the old lady was ready to embrace me. She would not have dared to ask it; but I knew how glad Eustace would be to have a personal account of him.

It was still early, and I met with no obstruction. My message was taken in to ask whether M. Darpent would see me, and he came down himself to lead me upstairs, looking very pale and worn, and giving me his left hand, as in a broken voice he made polite speeches on the honour I had done him.

"At least, Madame," he said, trembling, so that he was obliged to lean on the chair he was setting for me, "let me hear that you are come to tell me no bad news."

I assured him of the contrary, and made him sit down, while I told him of my brother's improvement, and anxiety respecting himself.

"I may tell him that you are a convalescent, and able to employ yourself in deep studies," I said, glancing at a big black book open on the table beside the arm-chair where he had been sitting.

"It is *St. Augustine*," he said. "I have been profiting by my leisure. I have almost come to the conclusion that there is nothing to be done for this unhappy France of ours but to pray for her. I had some hopes of the

young King; but did Madame hear what he did when our deputies presented their petition to the States-General? He simply tore the paper, and said: 'Retire, Messieurs.' He deems despotism his right and duty, and will crush all resistance. Men, like the Garde des Sceaux, have done their best, but we have no strength without the nobility, who simply use us as tools to gratify their animosity against one another."

"Only too true!" I said. "There is not even permission given to us nobles to do good among our own peasants."

"There is permission for nothing but to be vicious sycophants," cried he bitterly. "At least save for the soldier, who thinks only of the enemies of France. Ah! my mother is right. All we can do to keep our hands unstained is to retire from the world, and pray, study, and toil, like the recluses of Port Royal."

"Are you thinking of becoming one of them?" I exclaimed.

"I know not. Not while aught remains to be done for my country. Even that seems closed to me," he answered sadly. "I am an unfortunate man, Madame," he added; "I have convictions, and I cannot crush them as I see others, better than I, can do—by appealing to simple authority and custom."

"They kept you from your Counsellor's seat, I know," said I.

“And made every one, except M. le Premier President, mistrust me for a conceited fellow. Well, and now they must keep me from casting in my lot with the recluses who labour and pray at Port Royal aux Champs, unless I can satisfy myself on scruples that perhaps my Huguenot breeding, perhaps my conversations with M. *votre frère*, have awakened in me. And—and—though I have the leisure, I know my head and heart are far from being cool enough to decide on points of theology,” he added, covering his face for a moment with his hand.

“You a recluse of Port Royal! I cannot believe in it,” I said. “Tell me, Monsieur, is your motive despair? For I know what your hopes have been.”

“Ah, Madame, then you also know what their overthrow has been, though you can never know what it has cost me. Those eyes, as clear-sighted as they are beautiful, saw only too plainly the folly of expecting anything in the service I was ready to adopt, and scorned my hopes of thus satisfying her family. I deserved it. May she find happiness in the connection she has accepted.”

“Stay, sir,” I said. “What has she accepted? What have you heard?”

He answered with a paler look and strange smile that his clerk had been desired by M. de Poligny’s notary to let him see the parchments of the Ribaumont estate, preparatory to drawing up the contract of marriage, to be ready to be signed in a week’s time.

“ Ah, sir,” I said, “ you are a lawyer, and should know how to trust to such evidence. The contract is impossible without my brother, who is too ill to hear of it, and my sister has uttered no word of consent, nor will she, even though she should remain unmarried for life.”

“ Will she forgive me ?” he exclaimed, as though ready to throw himself at my feet.

I told him that he must find out for himself, and he returned that I was an angel from heaven. On the whole I felt more like a weak and talkative woman, a traitress to my mother ; but then, as I looked at him, there was such depth of wounded affection, such worth and superiority to all the men I was in the habit of seeing, that it was impossible not to feel that if Annora had any right to choose at all she had chosen worthily.

But I thought of my mother, and would not commit myself further, and I rose to leave him ; I had, however, waited too long. The mob were surging along the streets, as they always did when the magistrates came home from the Parliament, howling, bellowing, and yelling round the unpopular ones.

“ Death to the Big Beard !” was the cry, by which they meant good old Mathieu Molé, who had incurred their hatred for his loyalty, and then they halted opposite to the Maison Darpent to shout : “ Death to the Big Beard and his jackal !”

“ Do not fear, Madame, it will soon be over,” said

Darpen. "It is a little amusement in which they daily indulge. The torrent will soon pass by, and then I will do myself the honour of escorting you home."

I thought I was much safer than he, and would have forbidden him, but he smiled, and said I must not deny him the pleasure of walking as far as the door of the Hôtel de Nidemerle.

"But why do they thus assail you and the Garde des Sceaux?" I asked.

"Because so few in this unfortunate country can distinguish between persons and causes," he said. "Hatred to Mazarin and to the Queen as his supporter is the only motive that sways them. If he can only be kept out they are willing to throw themselves under the feet of the Prince that he may trample them to dust. Once, as you know, we hoped that there was public spirit enough in the *noblesse* and clergy, led by the Coadjutor, to join with us in procuring the assembling of the States-General, and thus constitutionally have taken the old safeguards of the people. They deceived us, and only made use of us for their own ends. The Duke of Orléans, who might have stood by us, is a broken reed, and now, in the furious clash of parties, we stand by, waiting till the conqueror shall complete our destruction and oppression, and in the meantime holding to the only duty that is clear to us—of loyalty to the King, let that involve what it may."

"And because it involves the Cardinal you are vitu-

perated," I said. "The Court ought to reward your faithfulness."

"So I thought once, but it is more likely to, reward our resistance in its own fashion if its triumph be once secured," he answered. "Ah, Madame! are visions of hope for one's country mere madness?"

And certainly I felt that even when peace was made between him and my sister, as it certainly soon would be, the future looked very black before them, unless he were too obscure for the royal thunderbolts to reach.

However, the mob had passed by, to shriek round the Hôtel de Ville.

Food and wine were dealt out to them by those who used them as their tools, and they were in a frightful state of demoralisation, but the way was clear for the present, and Clément Darpent would not be denied walking by my chair, though he could hardly have guarded me, but he took me through some by-streets, which avoided the haunts of the mob; and though he came no further than our door, the few words I ventured to bring home reassured Eustace, and made Annora look like another being.

CHAPTER XIII.

PORTE ST. ANTOINE.

(Margaret's Narrative.)

WHEN I try to look back on the time that followed, all is confusion. I cannot unravel the thread of events clearly in my own mind, and can only describe a few scenes that detach themselves, as it were, from a background of reports, true and false, of alarms, of messages to and fro, and a horrible mob surging backwards and forwards, so that when Mademoiselle returned to Paris and recalled me, I could only pass backwards and forwards between the Louvre and the Hôtel de Nidemerle after the servants had carefully reconnoitred to see that the streets were safe, and this although I belonged to the Orléans establishment, which was in favour with the mob. Their white scarves were as much respected as the tawny colours of Condé, which every one else wore who wished to be secured from insult.

I longed the more to be at home because my very dear brother, now convalescent, was preparing everything

for his journey to the Hague. He had an interview with M. de Poligny, and convinced him that it was hopeless to endeavour to gain Annora's consent to the match with his son, and perhaps the good gentleman was not sorry to withdraw with honour; and thus the suit waited till the Parliament should be at leisure to attend to private affairs.

My mother was greatly disappointed, above all when my brother, in his gentle but authoritative manner, requested her to withdraw her opposition to my sister's marriage with Darpent, explaining that he had consented, as knowing what his father's feeling would have been towards so good a man. She wept, and said that it certainly would not have been so bad in England, but under the nose of all her friends—bah! and she was sure that Solivet would kill the fellow rather than see *canaille* admitted into the family. However, if the wedding took place at the Hague, where no one would hear of it, and Annora chose to come back and live *en bourgeoise*, and not injure the establishment of the Marquis de Nidemerle, she would not withhold her blessing. So Annora was to go with Eustace, who indeed had not intended to leave her behind him, never being sure what coercion might be put on her.

In the meantime it was not possible for any peaceful person, especially one in my brother's state of health, to leave Paris. The city was between two armies, if not

three. On the one side was that of the Princes, on the other that of M. le Maréchal de Turenne, with the Court in its rear, and at one time the Duke of Lorraine advanced, and though he took no one's part, he filled the roads with horrible marauders trained in the Thirty Years' War. The two armies of Condé and Turenne skirmished in the suburbs, and it may be imagined what contradictory reports were always tearing us to pieces. Meantime Paris was strong enough to keep out either army, and that was the one thing that the municipality and the Parliament were resolved to do. They let single officers of the Prince's army, himself, the Dukes of Beaufort, Nemours, the Count d'Aubépine, and the rest, come in and out, but they were absolutely determined not to be garrisoned by forces in direct rebellion to the King. They would not stand a siege on their behalf, endure their military license, and then the horrors of an assault. The Duke of Orléans professed to be of the same mind, but he was a mere nonentity, and merely acted as a drag on his daughter, who was altogether devoted to the Prince of Condé. Cardinal de Retz vainly tried to persuade him to take the manly part of mediation, that would have been possible to him, at the head of the magistracy and municipality of Paris.

The Prince—Heaven forgive him—and the Duke of Beaufort hoped to terrify the magistracy into subservience by raising the populace against them. Foolish people!

as if their magistrates were not guarding them from horrible miseries. In fact, however, the mobs who raved up and down the streets, yelling round the Hôtel de Ville, hunting the magistrates like a pack of wolves, shouting and dancing round Monsieur's carriage or Beaufort's horse—these wretches were not the peaceable work-people, but bandits, ruffians, disbanded soldiers, criminals, excited by distributions of wine and money in the *cabarets* that they might terrify all who upheld law and order. If the hotels of the nobles and magistrates had not been constructed like little fortresses, no doubt these wretches would have carried their violence further. It seems to me, when I look back at that time, that even in the Louvre or the Luxembourg, one's ears were never free from the sound of howls and yells, more or less distant.

Clément Darpent, who had been separated from his work by his injury, and had not resumed it, so far as I could learn, was doing his best as a deputy at the Hôtel de Ville to work on those whom he could influence to stand firm to their purpose of not admitting the King's enemies, but, on the other hand, of not opening their gates to the royal army itself till the summons to the States-General should be actually issued, and the right of Parliament to refuse registration acknowledged. His friends among the younger advocates and the better educated of the *bourgeois* had rallied round him, and in the general anarchy made it their business to protect the

persons whom the mob placed in danger. My mother, in these days of terror, had recurred to her former reliance on him, and admitted him once more. I heard there had been no formal reconciliation with Annora, but they had met as if nothing had happened; and it was an understood thing that he should follow her to the Hague so soon as there should be an interval of peace; but he had a deep affection for his country and his city, and could not hear of quitting them, even for Annora's sake, in this crisis of fate, while he had still some vision of being of use, and at any rate could often save lives. Whenever any part of the mob was composed of real poor, who had experienced his mother's charities, he could deal with them; and when they were the mere savage bandits of the partisans, he and his friends scrupled not to use force. For instance, this I saw myself. The Duke of Orléans had summoned the *Prévôt des Marchands* and two of the *échevins* to the Luxembourg, to consult about supplies. The mob followed them all the way down the street, reviling them as men sold to Mazarin, and insisting that they should open the gates to the Prince. When they were admitted the wretches stood outside yelling at them like wolves waiting for their prey. I could not help appealing to Mademoiselle's kindness of heart, and asking if they could not be sheltered in the palace till the *canaille* grew tired of waiting. She shrugged her shoulders, and called them miserable Mazarinites, but I think she

would have permitted them to remain within if her father had not actually conducted them out, saying, "I will not have them fallen upon *in here*," which was like throwing them to the beasts. We ladies were full of anxiety, and all hurried up to the roof to see their fate.

Like hungry hounds the mob hunted and pelted these respectable magistrates down the Rue de Condé, their robes getting torn as they fled and stumbled along, and the officers, standing on the steps of the hotel of M. le Prince, among whom, alas! was d'Aubépine, waved their yellow scarves, laughed at the terror and flight of the unhappy magistrates, and hounded on the mob with "Ha! There! At him! Well thrown!"

Suddenly a darker line appeared, advancing in order; there was a moment's flash of rapiers, a loud trumpet call of "Back, ye cowards!" The row of men, mostly in black hats, with white collars, opened, took in among them the bleeding, staggering, cruelly-handled fugitives, and with a firm front turned back the vile pursuers. I could distinguish Clément Darpent's figure as he stood in front, and I could catch a tone of his voice, though I could not make out his words, as he reproached the populace for endeavouring to murder their best friends. I felt that my sister's choice had been a grand one, but my heart sank as I heard the sneer behind me: "*Hein!* the conceited lawyers are ruffling it finely. They shall pay for it!"

There was a really terrible fight on the steps of the Parliament House, when the mob forced the door of the great chamber, and twenty-five people were killed; but Darpent and his little party helped out a great many more of the counsellors, and the town-guard coming up, the mob was driven off. That evening I saw the Cardinal de Retz. He was in bad odour with Monsieur and Mademoiselle, because he was strongly against the Prince, and would fain have stirred the Duke of Orléans to interfere effectively at the head of the Parliament and city of Paris; but a man of his rank could not but appear at times at the Duke's palace, and on this fine May evening, when all had gone out after supper into the alleys of the garden of the Luxembourg, he found me out. How young, keen, and lively he still looked in spite of his scarlet! How far from one's notions of an Eminence!

"That was a grand exploit of our legal friend, Madame," he said; "but I am afraid he will burn his fingers. One is not honest with impunity unless one can blindly hang on to a party. Some friend should warn him to get out of the way when the crash comes, and a victim has to be sacrificed as a peace-offering. Too obscure, did Madame say? Ah! that is the very reason! He has secured no protector. He has opposed the Court and the Prince alike, and the magistrates themselves regard him as a dangerous man, with those notions *à lui* about venality, and his power of winning men to follow him! He saved

them, Madame says. That goes for nothing. He has shown his power and individuality, and therefore is factious, and when the Court demands a Frondeur there will be no one except perhaps old Molé to cry out in his defence, and Molé is himself too much overpowered. Some friend should give him a hint to take care of himself.

I told my brother as soon as I could, and he ardently wished to take Darpent away with him when it should be possible to quit Paris ; but at that moment Clément and his young lawyers still nourished some wild hope that the Parliament, holding the balance between the parties, might yet undeceive the young King and save the country.

The climax came at last on the second of July. M. le Prince was outside the walls, with the Portes St. Antoine, St. Honoré, and St. Denis behind him. M. de Turenne was pressing him very hard, endeavouring to cut him off from taking up a position on the other side of the army, at the confluence of the Seine and the Marne. The Prince had entreated permission to pass his baggage through the city, but the magistrates were resolved not to permit this, not knowing what would come after. Some entrenchments had been thrown up round the Porte St. Antoine when the Lorrainers had threatened us, and here the Prince took up his position outside the walls. There, as you remember, the three streets of Charenton, St. Antoine, and Charonne all meet in one great open

space, which the Prince occupied, heaping up his baggage behind him, and barricading the three streets—M. de Nemours guarded one, Vallon and Tavannes the other two. The Prince, with the Duke of la Rochefoucauld and fifty more brave gentlemen, waited ready to carry succour wherever it should be needed. Within, the Bastille frowned over all.

We were waiting in the utmost anxiety. A message came to Mademoiselle, at the Louvre, from the Prince, entreating her not to abandon him, or he would be crushed between the royal forces and the walls of Paris. Monsieur had, for a week, professed to be ill, but, on driving through the streets, lined with anxious people, and coming to the Luxembourg, we found him on the steps.

“I thought you were in bed,” said his daughter.

“I am not ill enough to be there,” he answered; “but I am not well enough to go out.”

Mademoiselle entreated him, in her vehement way, either to mount his horse and go to help M. le Prince, or at least to go to bed and act the invalid, for very shame; but he stood irresolute, whistling, and tapping on the window, too anxious to undress, and too timid to go out. Annora would have been ready to beat him. I think his daughter longed to do so. She tried frightening him.

“Unless you have a treaty from the Court in your pocket I cannot think how you can be so quiet. Pray,

have you undertaken to sacrifice M. le Prince to Cardinal Mazarin?"

He whistled on without answering, but she persevered, with alternate taunts and threats, till at last she extracted from him a letter to the magistrates at the Hôtel de Ville, telling them that she would inform them of his intentions. Off, then, we went again, having with us Madame de Nemours, who was in an agony about her husband, and presently we were at the Hôtel de Ville, where we were received by the Prévôt des Marchands, the *échevins*, and Marshal de l'Hôpital, Governor of Paris—all in the most intense anxiety. She was brought into the great hall, but she would not sit down—giving them her father's letter, and then desiring that the town-guard should take up arms in all the quarters. This was already done. Then they were to send the Prince 2000 men, and to put 400 men under her orders in the Place Royale. To all this they agreed; but when she asked them to give the Prince's troops a passage through the city, they demurred, lest they should bring on themselves the horrors of war.

Again she commanded, she insisted, she raved, telling them that if they let the Prince's army be destroyed those of M. de Turenne would assuredly come in and sack the city for its rebellion.

Marshal l'Hôpital said that but for Mademoiselle's friends, the royal army would never have come thither at

all, and Madame de Nemours began to dispute with him, but Mademoiselle interfered, saying: "Recollect, while you are discussing useless questions, the Prince is in the utmost danger;" and, as we heard the cries of the people, and beyond them the sharp rattle of musketry, she threatened them with appealing to the people.

She was really dignified in her strong determination, and she prevailed. Evil as the whole conduct of the Prince had been, no doubt the magistrates felt that it would be a frightful reproach to let the flower of the gentlemen of France be massacred at their gates. So, again we went off towards the Porte St. Antoine, hearing the firing and the shouts louder every minute. At the entrance of Rue St. Antoine we met M. Guitaut on horseback, supported by another man, bare-headed, all unbuttoned, and pale as death. "Shalt thou die?" screamed out Mademoiselle, as we passed the poor man, and he shook his head, though he had a great musket ball in his body. Next came M. de Vallon, carried in a chair, but not too much hurt to call out: "Alas, my good mistress, we are all lost."

"No, no," she answered; "I have orders to open a retreat."

"You give me life," he said.

More and more wounded, some riding, some on foot, some carried on ladders, boards, doors, mattresses. I saw an open door. It was that of Gneffier Verdon,

Clément's brother-in-law, and Darpent was assisting to carry in a wounded man whose blood flowed so fast that it made a stream along the pavement before the door. Mademoiselle insisted on knowing who it was, and there was only too much time, for, in spite of our impatience, and the deadly need, we could only move at a foot's pace through the ghastly procession we were meeting. The answer came back—"It is the Count d'Aubépine. He would bleed to death before he could be carried home, so M. Darpent has had him carried into his sister's house."

My heart was sick for poor Cécile. "My brother-in-law!" I said. "Oh, Mademoiselle, I entreat of you to let me go to his aid."

"Your amiable brother-in-law, who wanted to have you *enlevée*! No, no, my dear, you cannot be uneasy about him. The Generalissime of Paris cannot spare her Gildippe."

So I was carried on, consoling myself with the thought that Madame Verdon, who was as kind as her mother, would take care of him. When we came near the gate Mademoiselle sent orders by M. de Rohan to the captain of the gate to let her people in and out, and, at the same time, sent a message to the Prince, while she went into the nearest house, that of M. de Croix, close to the Bastille.

Scarcely were we in its *salon* when in came the Prince. He was in a terrible state, and dropped into a chair out of breath before he could speak. His face was

all over dust, his hair tangled, his collar and shirt bloody, his cuirass dented all over with blows, and he held his bloody sword in his hand, having lost the scabbard.

"You see a man in despair," he gasped out. "I have lost all my friends. Nemours, de la Rochefoucauld, Clinchamp, d'Aubépine, are mortally wounded ;" and, throwing down his sword, he began tearing his hair with his hands, and moving his feet up and down in an agony of grief.

It was impossible not to feel for him at such a moment, and Mademoiselle came kindly up to him, took his hand, and was able to assure him that things were better than he thought, and that M. de Clinchamp was only two doors off, and in no danger.

He composed himself a little, thanked her passionately, swallowed down some wine, begged her to remain at hand, then rushed off again to endeavour to save his friends, now that the retreat was opened to them. Indeed, we heard that M. de Turenne said it seemed to him that he did not meet one but twelve Princes of Condé in that battle, for it seemed as if he were everywhere at once.

We could only see into the street from the house where we were, and having received some civil messages from the Governor of the Bastille, Mademoiselle decided on going thither. The Governor turned out the guard to salute Mademoiselle, and at her request conducted us up stone stair after stone stair in the massive walls and towers. Now and then we walked along a gallery, with

narrow doors opening into it here and there; and then we squeezed up a spiral stone stair, never made for ladies, and lighted by narrow loopholes. In spite of all the present anxiety I could not help shuddering at that place of terror, and wondering who might be pining within those heavy doors. At last we came out on the battlements, a broad walk on the top of the great square tower, with cannon looking through the embrasures, and piles of balls behind them, gunners waiting beside each. It was extremely hot, but we could not think of that. And what a sight it was in the full glare of the summer sun! Mademoiselle had a spy-glass, but even without one we could see a great deal, when we were not too much dazzled. There was the open space beneath us, with the moat and ditch between, crowded with baggage and artillery near the walls, with gentlemen on foot and horseback, their shorn plumes and soiled looks telling of the deadly strife—messengers rushing up every moment with tidings, and carrying orders from the group which contained the Prince, and wounded men being carried or helped out at the openings of the three chief suburban streets, whose irregular high-roofed houses and trees, the gray walls and cloisters of the abbey, hid the actual fight, only the curls of smoke were rising continually; and now and then we saw the flash of the firearms, while the noise was indescribable—of shots, shrieks, cries to come on, and yells of pain. My brother told me afterwards that in all the

battles put together he had seen in England he did not think he had heard half the noise that came to him in that one afternoon on the top of the Hôtel de Nidemerle. The Cavaliers gave a view halloo, and cried, "God save the King!" the Ironsides sang a Psalm, and then they set their teeth and fought in silence, and hardly any one cried out when he was hurt—while here the shots were lost in the cries, and oh! how terrible with rage and piteous with pain they were!

Beyond the houses and gardens, where lie the heights of Charonne, were to be seen, moving about like ants, a number of troops on foot and on horseback, and with colours among them. Mademoiselle distinguished carriages among them. "The King is there, no doubt," she said; and as I exclaimed, "Ah yes, and my son," she handed me the glass, by which I could make out what looked very like the royal carriages; but the King was on horseback, and so was my dear boy, almost wild with the fancy that his mother was besieged, and scarcely withheld from galloping down by assurances that no lady was in the] slightest danger.

Below, in the hollow, towards where Bagnolet rose white among the fields and vineyards, the main body of Turenne's troops were drawn up in their regiments, looking firm and steady, in dark lines, flashing now and then in that scorching July sunshine, their colours flying, and their plumes waving. A very large proportion of them

were cavalry, and the generals were plainly to be made out by the staff which surrounded each, and their gestures of command.

We presently saw that the generals were dividing their horse, sending one portion towards Pincourt, the other towards Neuilly. Mademoiselle, who really had the eye of a general, instantly divined that they were going to advance along the water-side, so as to cut off the retreat of the Prince's forces by interposing between the *faubourg* and the moat, and thus preventing them from availing themselves of the retreat through Paris. M. le Prince was, as we could perceive, on the belfry of the Abbey of St. Antoine, but there he could not see as we could, and Mademoiselle instantly despatched a page to warn him, and at the same time she gave orders to the artillerymen to fire on the advancing troops as soon as they came within range. This was the most terrible part to me of all. We were no longer looking on to save life, but firing on the loyal and on the army where my son was. Suppose the brave boy had broken away and ridden on! I was foolish enough to feel as if they were aiming at his heart when the fire and smoke burst from the mouths of those old brass guns, and the massive tower seemed to rock under our feet, and the roar was in our ears, and Madame de Fiesque and the other ladies screamed in chorus, and when the smoke rolled away from before our eyes we could see that the foremost ranks were broken,

that all had halted, and that dead and wounded were being picked up.

In very truth that prompt decision of Mademoiselle's saved the Prince's army. Turenne could not send on his troops in the face of the fire of the Bastille, and, for aught he knew, of the resistance of all the town-guard of Paris; and the Prince was able to draw off all his army through the Porte St. Antoine without the loss of one wounded man or a single gun. Mademoiselle, having seen the effect of her cannon, came down again to provide for wine and food being sent to the exhausted soldiers, who had been fighting all day in such scorching heat that we heard that at the first moment of respite, M. le Prince hurried into an orchard, took off every fragment of clothing, and rolled about on the grass under the trees to cool himself after the intolerable heat.

Just as I emerged from the court of the Bastille, some one touched me, and said, "Pardon me, Madame," and, looking round, I saw M. Darpent, with his hat in his hand. "Madame," he entreated, "is it possible to you to come to poor Madame d'Aubépine? I have fetched her to her husband, but there will be piteous work when his wound is visited, and she will need all the support that can be given to her. My mother and sister are doing all in their power, but they have many other patients on their hands."

I hurried to my Princess, and with some difficulty

obtained a hearing. She called up M. Darpent, and made him tell her the names of all the five sufferers that he and his sister had taken into the Verdon house, and how they were wounded, for Condé's followers being almost all noble, she knew who every one was. Two were only slightly wounded, but two were evidently dying, and as none of their friends were within reach, Madame Darpent and her daughter were forced to devote themselves to these, though fortunately they had not been brought in till her son had piloted Madame d'Aubépine through the crowded streets—poor little Cécile ! who had hardly ever set foot on the pavement before. Her Count was in a terrible state, his right leg having been torn off by a cannon-ball below the knee, and he would have bled to death long before reaching home had not Clément Darpent observed his condition and taken him into the house, where Madame had enough of the hereditary surgical skill acquired in the civil wars to check the bleeding, and put a temporary dressing on the wounds until a doctor could be obtained ; for, alas ! they were only too busy on that dreadful day.

Mademoiselle consented to part with me when she had heard all, suddenly observing, however, as she looked at Darpent: "But, Monsieur, are you not the great Frondeur with ideas of your own ? Did not this same d'Aubépine beat you soundly ? *Hein !* How is it that you are taking him in—— ? Your enemy, is he not ?"

“So please your Royal Highness, we know no enemies in wounded men,” replied Darpent, bowing.

Her attention was called off, and she said no more, as Clément and I hastened away as fast as we could through a by-street to avoid the march of the troops of Condé, who were choking the Rue St. Antoine, going, however, in good order. He told me on the way that Madame d'Aubépine had shown great courage and calmness after the first shock, and after a few questions had hung on his arm through the streets, not uttering a word, though he felt her trembling all over, and she had instantly assumed the whole care of her husband with all the instinct of affection. But as he and his mother felt certain that amputation would be necessary, he had come to fetch me to take care of her.

Fortunately for us, we had not to cross the Rue St. Antoine to enter the Maison Verdon, but Clément opened a small door into the court with a private key, presently knocking at a door and leading me in. Armand d'Aubépine had been the first patient admitted, so his was the chief guest-chamber—a vast room, at the other end of which was a great bed, beside which stood my poor Cécile, seeing nothing but her husband, looking up for a moment between hope and terror in case it should be the surgeon, but scarcely taking in that it was I till I put my arms round her and kissed her; and then she put her finger to her lips, cherishing a hope that because the

poor sufferer had closed his eyes and lay still in exhaustion, he might sleep. There he lay, all tinge of colour gone from his countenance, and his damp, dark hair lying about his face, and with my arm round her waist stood watching till he opened his eyes with a start and moan of pain, and cried, as his eye fell on me: "Madame! Ah! Is Bellaise safe?" Then, recollecting himself: "Ah no! I forgot! But is he safe—the Prince?"

I told him that the Prince and his army were saved, feeling infinitely touched that his first word should have been of my Philippe, whom he seemed to have forgotten; but indeed it was not so. His next cry was: "Oh! Madame, Madame, would that this were Freiburg! Would that I could die as Philippe died! Oh, help me!"

Cécile threw herself forward, exclaiming, in broken words, that he must not say so; he would not die.

"You too," he said, "you too—the best wife in the world—whom I have misused—— Ah! that I could begin all over again!"

"You will—you will, my most dear!" she cried. "Oh! the wound will cure."

And, strange mixture that he was, he moaned that he should only be a poor maimed wretch.

Darpen now brought in a priest, fresh from giving the last Sacraments to the two mortally-wounded men. The wife looked at him in terror, but both he and Clément gently assured her that he was not come for that purpose

to M. le Comte, but to set his mind at rest by giving him absolution before the dressing of the wound. Of course it was a precaution lest he should sink under the operation ; and as we led her from the bedside, Clément bade me not let her return as yet.

But that little fragile creature was more entirely the soul of love than any other being I have known. She did, indeed, when we had her in Madame Verdon's little oratory hard by, kneel before the crucifix and pray with me, but her ear caught, before mine, the departing steps of the priest, and the entering ones of the surgeon. She rose up, simply did not listen to my persuasions, but walked in with quiet dignity. Madame Darpent was there, and would have entreated her to retire, but she said : " This is a wife's place." And as she took his hands she met a look in his eyes which I verily believe more than compensated to her for all the years of weary pining in neglect. The doctor would have ordered her off, but she only said : " I shall not cry, I shall not faint." And they let her keep his hand, though Clément had to hold him. I waited, setting our hostess free to attend to one of her dying charges, from whom she could ill be spared.

And Cécile kept her word, though it was a terrible time, for there was no endurance in poor Armand's shallow nature, and his cries and struggles were piteous. He could dare, but not suffer, and had not both she and

Clément been resolute and tranquil, the doctor owned that he could not have succeeded.

“But Madame la Comtesse is a true heroine,” he said, when our patient was laid down finally, tranquil and exhausted, to be watched over through the night.

The time that followed was altogether the happiest of all my poor sister-in-law’s married life. Her husband could hardly bear to lose sight of her for a moment, or to take anything from any hand save hers. If Madame Darpent had not absolutely taken the command of both she would never have had any rest, for she never seemed sensible of fatigue; indeed, to sit with his hand in hers really refreshed her more than sleep. When she looked forward to his recovery, her only regret was at her own wickedness in the joy that *would* spring up when she thought of her poor cripple being wholly dependent on her, and never wanting to leave her again. I had been obliged to leave her after the first night, but I spent much of every day in trying to help her, and she was always in a tearful state of blissful hope, as she would whisper to me his promises for the future and his affectionate words—the fretful ones, of which she had her full share, were all forgotten, except by Clément Darpent, who shrugged his shoulders at them, and thought when he had a wife——

Poor Armand, would he have been able, even as a maimed man, to keep his word? We never knew, for,

after seeming for a fortnight to be on the way to recovery, he took a turn for the worse, and after a few days of suffering, which he bore much better than the first, there came that cessation of pain which the doctors declared to mean that death was beginning its work. He was much changed by these weeks of illness. He seemed to have passed out of that foolish worldly dream that had enchanted him all his poor young life—he was scarcely twenty-seven—and to have ceased from that idol-worship of the Prince which had led him to sacrifice on that shrine the wife whom he had only just learned to love and prize. “Ah, sister!” he said to me, “I see now what Philippe would have made me.”

He asked my pardon most touchingly for his share in trying to abduct me, and Clément Darpent’s also for the attack on him, though, as he said, Darpent had long before shown his forgiveness. His little children were brought to him, making large eyes with fright at his deathlike looks, and clinging to their mother, too much terrified to cry when he kissed them, blessed them, and bade Maurice consider his mother, and obey her above all things, and to regard me as next to her.

“Ah! if I had had such a loving mother I should never have become so brutally selfish,” he said; and, indeed, the sight of her sweet, tender, patient face seemed to make him grieve for what he had made her suffer more than for all the sins of his dissipated life. His confessor

declared that he was in the most pious disposition of penitence. And thus, one summer evening, with his wife, Madame Darpent, and myself, watching and praying round him, Armand d'Aubépine passed away from the temptations that beset a French noble.

I took my poor Cécile home sinking into a severe illness, which I thought for many days would be her death. All her old terror of Madame Croquelebois returned, and for many nights and days Madame Darpent or I had to be constantly with her, though we had outside troubles enough of our own. Those two sick-rooms seem to swallow up my recollections.

CHAPTER XIV.

ESCAPE.

(*Annora's Narrative.*)

THERE was indeed a good deal passing beyond those rooms where Margaret was so absorbed in her d'Aubépines that I sometimes thought she forgot her own kindred in them. Poor things! they were in sad case, though how Cécile could break her heart over a fellow who had used her so vilely, I could never understand. He repented, they said. So much the better for him; but a pretty life he would have led her if he had recovered. Why, what is there for a French noble to do but to fight, dance attendance on the King, and be dissipated? There is no House of Lords, no Quarter-Sessions, no way of being useful; and if he tries to improve his peasantry he is a dangerous man, and they send him a *lettre de cachet*. He has leave to do nothing but oppress the poor wretches, and that he is fairly obliged to do, so heavy are his expenses at Court. The King may pension him, but the pension is all wrung out of the poor in another shape!

Heaven knows our English nobles are far from what they might be, but they have not the stumbling-blocks in their way that the French have under their old King, who was a little lad then, and might have been led to better things if his mother had had less pride and more good sense.

Gaspard de Nidemerle does the best he can. He is a really good man, I do believe, but he has been chiefly with the army, or on his own estate. And he can effect little good, hampered as he is on all sides.

In those days, Clément Darpent was sad enough at heart, but he did not quite despair of his country, though things were getting worse and worse. Mademoiselle had saved the Prince and his crew, besotted as she was upon them; and finely they requited Paris, which had sheltered them. All the more decent folk among them were lying wounded in different houses, and scarcely any of their chiefs were left afoot but the Duke of Beaufort, with his handsome face and his fine curls of flaxen hair, looking like a king, but good for nothing but to be a king of ruffians.

What does the Prince do but go to the Hôtel de Ville with the Dukes of Orléans and Beaufort, at six o'clock in the evening of the 4th of July, under pretence of thanking the magistrates and deputies for letting him in. Then he demanded of them to proclaim that the King was a prisoner in Mazarin's hands, and to throw themselves into the war. They would do no such thing, nor let them-

selves be intimidated, whereupon the Prince went out on the steps, and shouted to his rabble rout, where there were plenty of soldiers in disguise, who had been drinking ever since noon : "These gentlemen will do nothing for us," he cried. "Do what you like with them."

And then, like a coward, he got into a carriage with Monsieur and drove off, while M. de Beaufort, in a mercer's shop, acted general to the mob, who filled the whole place. It was a regular storm. Flags with "*Arrêt d'Union*" were displayed, shots fired, the soldiers got into the houses and aimed in at the windows, logs of wood smeared with fat were set fire to before the doors so as to burn them down.

Clément, who was a deputy for his *arrondissement*, had, while this was going on, been getting together the younger and stronger men with the guard, to make a barricade of benches, tables, and chairs ; and they defended this for a long time, but ammunition failed them, and the barricade began to give way amid the shouts of the mob. The poor old men crouching in the halls were confessing to the curés, expecting death every moment ; but, happily, even that long July evening had an end ; darkness came down on them, and there were no lights. The mob went tumbling about, at a greater loss than the deputies and magistrates, who did at least know the way. Clément, with a poor old gouty *échevin* on his arm, struggled out, he knew not how, into one of the passages, where a fellow rushed at them, crying, "Down with the Mazarins!"

but Clément knew by his voice that he was no soldier or bandit, but a foolish artisan, and at haphazard said : " Come, come, my good lad, none of this nonsense. This gentleman will give you a crown if you will help him out."

The man obeyed directly, muttering that he only did as others did ; and when they had got out into the street, Clément, finding himself not far from the place where the lights and voices showed him that some one was in command, managed to get to the mercer's shop with the poor old *échevin*, where he found M. de Beaufort, with his hair shining in the lamplight, his yellow scarf, and his long white feather hanging over the features that were meant to be like an angel's. When Clément, in after times, read the Puritan poet Milton's *Paradise Lost*, he said he was sure that some of the faces of the fallen spirits in Pandemonium had that look of ruined beauty that he saw in the King of the Markets on that night.

Some of the town councillors who had got out sooner had gone to entreat the Duke of Orléans to stop the massacre, but he would do nothing but whistle, and refer them to his nephew De Beaufort. They were standing there, poor men, and he tapping his lip with his cane, stroking down his moustache, and listening to them with a sneer as they entreated him not to let their fellows perish. And then among them stood up Clément, with his old *échevin* by his side. He was resolved, he said, and began :

"Son of Henri IV., will you see the people perish whom he loved from the bottom of his heart? Yes, Monsieur, you inherit the charm by which he drew hearts after him, and was a true king of men! Will you misuse that attraction to make them fly at one another's throats? In the name of the great Henri and his love for his people, I appeal to you to call off yonder assassins."

He had so far prevailed that Beaufort muttered something about not knowing things had gone so far, and assured the magistrates round him of his protection. He even went to the door and told some of his prime tools of agitation that it was enough, and that they might give the signal of recall; but whether things had gone too far, or whether he was not sincere, the tumult did not quiet down till midnight. After all, the rogues had the worst of it, for two hundred bodies of theirs were picked up, and only three magistrates and twenty-five deputies, though a good many more were hurt.

Clément saw his old *échevin* safe home, left word at our house that he was unhurt, but did not come in; and at Maison Verdon, no one had even guessed what danger he was in, for all the attention of the household was spent on the wounded men, one of whom died that night.

Things got worse and worse. Eustace was very anxious to leave Paris before the summer was over, lest bad weather should make him unable to travel. The

year he had put between himself and Millicent had more than run out ; and besides, as he said to me, he would not expose himself again to undergo what he had endured in his former illness, since he could have no confidence that my mother, and even Margaret, might not be driven to a persecution, which, if his senses should fail him, might apparently succeed. “Nor,” said he, “can I leave you unprotected here, my sister.”

We lingered, partly from the difficulty of getting horses, and the terrible insecurity of the roads, partly from the desire to get Clément to attend to Cardinal de Retz’s warning and escape with us. There was no difficulty on his mother’s account. She was longing to enter Port Royal, and only delayed to keep house for him, with many doubts whether she were not worldly in so doing ; but he still felt his voice and presence here in the Hôtel de Ville a protest, and he could not give up the hope of being of use to his country.

Meantime, M. de Nemours recovered from his wound only to be killed in a duel by M. de Beaufort, his brother-in-law ; the Prince of Condé’s rage at his defeat threw him into a malignant fever ; the Duke of Orléans was in despair at the death of his only son, a babe of five years old ; the *Fronde* was falling to pieces, and in the breathing time, Eustace obtained a pass from our own King, and wrote to Solivet, who was with the royal army outside, to get him another for himself and me—explaining that

he was bound by his promise to Madame van Hunker, and that his health was in such a state that my care was needful to him.

Solivet answered the letter, sending the passport, but urging on him to remain at Paris, which would soon be at peace, since Mazarin was leaving the Court, and a general amnesty was to be proclaimed if the gates of Paris were opened to the King without the Cardinal.

But there were to be exceptions to this amnesty, and Solivet wrote at the same time to my mother. I have not the letter, and cannot copy it, but what he said was to urge her not to permit my brother to drag me away to Holland, for when he was gone all might still be arranged as she wished. As to "*ce coquin de Darpent*," as Solivet kindly called him, he had made himself a marked man, whom it was dangerous to leave at large, and his name was down for Vincennes or the Bastille, if nothing worse, so that there need be no more trouble about him. So said my half-brother, and he had no doubt made himself certain of the fact, in which he somewhat prematurely exulted.

My poor dear mother! I may seem to have spoken unkindly and undutifully about her in the course of these recollections. She was too French, and I too English, ever to understand one another, but in these last days that we were together she compensated for all that was past. She could not see a good and brave young life

consigned to perpetual imprisonment only for being more upright than his neighbours; she did remember the gratitude she owed even to a *créature comme ça*, and I even believe she could not coolly see her daughter's heart broken. She had not even Margaret to prompt or persuade her, but she showed the letter at once to Eustace, and bade him warn his friend. O mother! I am thankful that you made me love you at last.

Eustace drove first to the office, and got his passes countersigned by the magistracy for himself and me and our servant, showing a *laquais* whose height and complexion fairly agreed with those of Clément Darpent. There was no time to be lost. In the dusk of an August evening my brother was carried to the corner of the Rue St. Antoine in my mother's sedan. He could not walk so far, and he did not wish to attract observation, and he reached the house on foot, cloaked, and with his hat slouched. He found that Clément had received a note, as he believed from the Coadjutor, who always knew everything, giving the like warning that he would be excluded from the amnesty. His hopes of serving his country were over, and he felt it so bitterly, and so grieved for it, that he scarcely thought at first of his personal safety. It was well we had thought for him.

Eustace had brought a suit of our livery under his cloak, and he and poor Madame cut Clément's hair as short as if he had been a Roundhead. She had kept

plenty of money in the house ever since she had feared for her son, and this they put in a belt round his waist. Altogether, he came out not at all unlike the *laquais* Jacques Pierrot, whom he was to personate. Eustace said the old lady took leave of her son with her stern Jansenist composure, which my tender-hearted Clément could not imitate. Eustace rejoined the chairmen and came back through the dark streets, while Clément walked at some distance, and contrived to slip in after him. My mother had in the meantime gone to the Hôtel d'Aubépine and fetched poor Meg.

Cécile had just taken the turn, as they say, and it was thought she would live, but Meg could scarcely be spared from her, and seemed at first hardly to understand that our long-talked-of departure was suddenly coming to pass. It was well that she had so much to occupy her, for there was no one, save her son, whom she loved like that brother of ours, and she would not, or could not, realise that she was seeing him for the last time.

It was a hot August night, and we worked and packed all through it, making Eustace lie down and rest, though sleep was impossible, and he said he wanted to see Meg and his mother as long as he could. As to Clément, we were afraid of the servants noticing him, so Eustace had locked him up in his own room, but he slept as little as any of us, and when his breakfast was brought him, he had never touched his supper. Certainly mine was the

saddest bridegroom who ever stole away to be married ; but I could forgive him. Did I not know what it was to be an exile, with one's heart torn for one's country's disgrace ?

The difficulty was to get rid of the real Jacques Pierrot, but he gave us a little assistance in that way by coming crying to M. le Baron, to ask permission to take leave of his mother in the Faubourg St. Denis. This was readily granted to him, with strong insistence that he should be back by eleven o'clock, whereas we intended to start as soon as the gates were opened, namely, at six. Eustace had some time before purchased four mules and a carriage. He was not fit to ride in bad weather, and for me to have made a journey on horseback would have attracted too much attention, but the times were too uncertain for us to trust to posting, and mules, though slower than horses, would go on longer without resting, and were less likely to be seized by any army. I would take no maid-servant, as she would only have added to our dangers.

We ate our hearts till seven, when we succeeded in getting the mules to the door, and haste softened the parting for the moment. Indeed, Eustace and Meg had said much to each other in the course of the night. We had both knelt to ask my mother's forgiveness for having so often crossed her, and she finally wept and fainted, so that Meg was wholly occupied in attending to her.

Clément stood by the carriage, looking his part so well that my first impression was "that stupid Jacques has come back after all." Our anxiety now was to be entirely out of reach before the fellow came back, and hard was it to brook the long delay at the Porte St. Denis ere the officials deigned to look at us and our passes. However, my brother had gone through too many gates not to know that silver and an air of indifference will smooth the way, so we came through at last without our valet having been especially scanned.

Beyond the gates the sight was sad enough, the houses in the suburbs with broken windows and doors as though pillaged, the gardens devastated, the trees cut down, and the fields, which ought to have been ripening to harvest, trampled or mown for forage, all looking as if a hostile invader had been there, and yet it was the sons of the country that had done this, while swarms of starving people pursued us begging. Alas! had we not seen such a sight at home? We knew what it must be to Clément, but as he sat by the driver we durst not say a word of comfort to him.

At our intended resting-place for the night—I forget the name of it—we found every house full of soldiers of the royal army, and but for our passes I do not know what we should have done. Before every door there were dragoons drinking and singing round the tables, and some were dancing with the girls of the village. Some of them

shouted at us when they saw we were coming from Paris, and called us runaway rebels; but Eustace showed his pass, told them what it was, for they could not read, and desired their officer to be fetched. He came out of the priest's house, and was very civil. He said Colonel de Solivet had desired that all assistance should be given to us, but that we had not been expected so soon. He really did not know where to quarter the lady or the mules, and he advised us to go on another league, while he despatched an orderly with the intelligence to the colonel. There was nothing else to be done, though my brother, after his sleepless night, was becoming much exhausted, in spite of the wine we gave him, while as to the mules, they had an opinion of their own, poor things, as to going on again, and after all sorts of fiendish noises from the coachman, and furious lashings with his whip, the dragoons pricked them with their swords, and at last they rushed on at a gallop that I thought would have shaken Eustace to death.

However, before we had gone very far Solivet rode out to meet us. It was another cause of anxiety, although it was dusk, and he had hardly ever seen or spoken with Clément. He had expected us to have slept at St. Denis and to have arrived the next day, and he asked, what could have made us start so early, just as if we had been criminals fleeing from justice; but he took us to the château where he was quartered, and, though they were

much crowded there, the family tried to make us comfortable. The master of the house gave up his own bed to my brother, and I shared that of his mother. "Jacques," in his character of valet, was to attend on his master, and sleep on the floor; and this gave the only opportunity of exchanging any conversation freely, but even this had to be done with the utmost caution, for the suite of rooms opened into each other, and Solivet, who was very anxious about Eustace, came in and out to see after him, little guessing how much this added to the inward fever of anxiety which banished all sleep from his eyes.

The kind people thought him looking so ill the next morning that they wanted to bleed him, and keep us there for a few days, but this was not to be thought of, as indeed Eustace declared, when I felt some alarm, that he could not be better till he was out of French territory.

So we pushed on, and Solivet rode beside the window all day, making our course far safer and easier in one way, but greatly adding in others to the distressful vigilance that coloured Eustace's thin cheeks and gleamed in his eyes, and made his fingers twitch at his sword whenever there was an unexpected halt, or any one overtook us. He conveyed us quite beyond the army, and brought us as far as Beauvais, where he made himself our host at the Lion Rouge, and gave us an excellent supper, which I could hardly swallow when I thought of his barbarous intentions towards Clément, who had to wait on us all

the time, standing behind my chair and handing dishes.

I believe Solivet really meant to be a good brother ; but his words were hard to endure, when he lectured us each apart, with all the authority of a senior—told me that Eustace was dying, and that every mile he travelled was hastening his end, laughing to scorn that one hope which buoyed me up, that Dirkius could do more for him than any one else, and almost commanding me to take him home again to Paris while it was possible.

And he equally harassed Eustace the next morning with representations of the folly of taking me away to Holland, and breaking off the advantageous Poligny match, to gratify my headstrong opposition and desire for a *mésalliance*, which would now happily be impossible, the fellow having ruined himself.

The fellow entered at that moment with M. le Baron's coat and boots, and Eustace could hardly repress a smile. We could not but rejoice when Solivet took leave of us at the carriage door, very affectionate, but shrugging his shoulders at our madness, and leaving a corporal and his party to guard us to the frontier. They prolonged the sense of constraint, and forced us to be very guarded with poor Clément, but otherwise they were very useful. The inhabitants fancied us by turns great princes or great criminals, or both, being escorted out of the country. Once we were taken for the Queen escaping with the

Cardinal, another time for the Prince of Condé eloping with Mademoiselle ; but any way the soldiers secured for us plenty of civility, and the best food and lodgings to be had. They pricked on our mules with a good will, and when one of them fell lame they scoured the neighbourhood to find another, for which Eustace endeavoured to pay the just price, but I am afraid it went into the corporal's pocket, and Clément never so nearly betrayed himself as when he refused to share with the escort the reckoning of which they stripped the landlord. Integrity in a Parisian valet was all too suspicious ! However, to us they behaved very well ; and, if all we heard were true, their presence may have saved us from being robbed, if not murdered, long before we reached the frontier.

CHAPTER XV.

BRIDAL PEARLS.

WHEN once over the border, and our passports duly examined, we breathed freely, and at our first resting-place Clément took out a suit of my brother's clothes and appeared once more as a gentleman, except for his short hair. He was able, wherever French would serve, to take the management of our journey.

We finished it as before in a canal boat, and the rest of mind and body, and the sense of approaching Millicent, certainly did Eustace good; the hectic fever lessened, and though he slept little at night, he had much good slumber by day, lying on cloaks on deck as we quietly glided along the water, between the fields full of corn, with harvest beginning, and the tall cocks of hay in the large fields, all plenty and high cultivation, and peaceful industry, in contrast with the places we had left devastated by civil war, and the famished population.

The comparison made Clément groan; and yet that canal journey had a pensive joy about it, as we sat beside

our sleeping brother and conversed freely and fearlessly, as we had never been able to do for ten minutes together in all the long years that we had loved one another. There was something very sweet in the knowing that, exile as he was, he and I must be all the world to one another. And so indeed it has been. After our stormy beginning, our life has been well-nigh like our voyage on that smooth Dutch stream.

However, the sorrows were not yet over, although at that time we trusted that there would be healing for my dear brother in the very air of the Hague. We landed on a fine August evening, and were at once recognised by some of the English gentlemen who had little to do but to loiter about the quays and see the barges come in. It rejoiced my heart to hear my brother called Lord Walwyn again, instead of by his French title. Yet therewith, it was a shock to see how changed they thought him since he had left them a year before; but they vied with one another in helping us, and we were soon housed in good lodgings. I knew what Eustace most wished to learn, and asked, with as good an air of indifference as I could assume, whether Vrow van Hunker were in the town.

"Vrow van Hunker, the Providence of the Cavaliers?" asked one. "No; she is at her country-house, where she hath taken in three or four poor starving ladies and parsons with their families."

When I heard how she was using old Van Hunker's wealth—in providing for our poor loyal folk, and especially for the clergy, pensioning some, hospitably receiving others in her own house, and seeking employment for others—I had to repent of all the scorn with which I had looked on Millicent Wardour as a poor fickle creature, and now I had to own that my brother's love had been as nearly worthy of him as any creature could be.

Eustace would not, however, go to visit her until he had seen Dr. Dirkius, to whom he repaired early the next day, having caused a hackney coach to be ordered against his return, and bestowed Clément on an English friend who could speak French well. For Eustace held that it would be more fitting, in the sight of the world, for me to go with him to visit Madame van Hunker.

The carriage was at the door when he came back from the physician's. There never was anything to find fault with in his looks, and on this day, with his light brown hair and beard freshly trimmed and shining, his clear skin with the red colour in his cheek, and his bright eyes, in their hollow caves, there was something so transparent and sublimated in his aspect, that I thought that he looked more like a spirit than a bridegroom. He was grave and silent by the way, and there was something about him that withheld me from asking what Dirkius had said to him.

Thus we reached the entrance of the great double

avenue, along which, as we presently saw, two English clergymen were walking together in conversation, and we saw a little farther on some children at play.

"This is well," said Eustace, as he looked out. "I thank God for this! It will be all the better for her that such a good work is begun."

"Nay," said I, "but what will the poor things do when she loses old Hunker's gold?"

"Sister," said Eustace, "I have left this too long, but I thought you understood that I am never like to wed my poor Millicent."

"Dirkius?" I said.

"Dirkius does but confirm what I have known ever since the spring, and so have you too, Nan, that it would be a miracle should I be here after this winter."

I had known it by my inner conviction, and heard him say the like often before; it was only a fancied outward hope that had been sustaining me, and I could obey when he bade me look cheerfully on Millicent, and remember the joy it was to him to see her at all, and, above all, employed in such tasks as would bring comfort to her.

The great Dutch house seemed full of English. Gentlewomen were sitting in the tapestried hall, spinning or working with their needle. We had been known to one or two of them in former times, and while they greeted us word was taken to Madame van Hunker that we were there, and a servant brought us word to ask us to come

to her in her own parlour. There, up a few shallow steps, in a quiet, cool, wainscoted room, adorned with Eastern porcelain on shelves, we found her with her little daughter at her knee.

She met us at the door with a few faltering words, excusing herself for having given us the trouble to come to her.

"Best so, Millicent," said Eustace, and as he spoke she lifted her eyes to his face and I saw a look of consternation pass over her features at sight of his wasted looks; but I only saw it for a moment, for he put an arm round her, and kissed her brow, as she hid her face against him.

The child, not contented with my embrace, ran and pulled his coat, crying, "My lord, my lord, I can speak English now;" and he stooped to kiss her, while her mother turned to me with swimming eyes of mute inquiry, as of one who saw her long-cherished hope fulfilled only for her sorrow. She was less altered than had been feared. That smooth delicacy of her skin was indeed lost which had made her a distinguished beauty; but she still had a pair of eyes that made her far from insignificant, and there was an innocence, candour, and pleading sweetness in her countenance that—together, perhaps, with my pity—made even me, who had hitherto never liked her, love her heartily.

I heard little or nothing of what they said to one

another, being employed in keeping the child from them. She prattled freely in English, and was pleased to show me her baby-house, a marvel of Dutch neatness of handiwork, like that one which Madame van Hunker brought you, my daughter Peggy, when you were a little one. The doll we had given her had, however, the place of honour. Her sister, little Emilia told me, was married a month ago, and she was proceeding to make the little Dutch puppets in her baby-house enact the wedding, one being dressed in a black gown and stiff ruff, like a Genevan minister, when she caught a tone that made her cry out that mother was weeping, and stump across the floor in her stout little shoes to comfort her, before I could hinder her.

My brother and her mother set her down between them, and I had nought to do but to put in order the baby-house, till a great bell clanged through the house, which was the signal for dinner. Madame van Hunker was calmer by that time, and let Eustace hand her down, and place her at the head of the table, where she had around her no less than four families and two widows of our poor exiled Cavaliers and clergy. We had not found ourselves in so English a world for years past.

The hostess sat as one in a dream, doing her part like one moved by wires, and eating scarce anything, while Eustace showed all his usual courtliness of manner and grace. After dinner, he rested on a couch, as was his

wont, before going back, and Millicent drew me into her chamber and wept on my neck, as she made me tell her all she had not been able to learn from him.

He had been very tender with her, and tried to persuade her that it was all for the best, and that there was happiness for them in the having no one between them now. She, poor woman, would fain, as I saw, have thrown aside all her houses and wealth to be his, and to tend him, were it merely for a few weeks, and she felt as if her love was strong enough to be his cure; but he had spoken of the cruel selfishness of giving away her power of aiding all these our fellow-countrymen in order that they two might come together for what he knew would be so brief a time. Yet he had not taken all hope from her, for he had talked of their reconsidering the matter if he were in better health after the winter, and, meantime, they could see each other often.

Poor thing! I believe she expected the miracle that might make him yet recover, and so she bore up, while Eustace was verily happy—having lived, as it were, nearly into spiritual love, and left behind that which had been earthly and corporeal, and thus he was content to rest. He had strained himself very hard to accomplish the journey, bring Clément and me into safety, and see Millicent again, and when the effort ceased, we fully saw, for the first time, how great it had been, and how far he was gone on that other journey. I do not think he crossed

the threshold of our lodging half a dozen times after our arrival ; but Millicent came into her town-house, and was with him every day. She had fitted the great dining chamber of that town-house as a chapel for our English service, and my brother went thither on two Sundays, on the second of which he saw Mr. Darpent received into our English Protestant Church. Clément had long inclined that way, having never forgotten the Huguenot training of his childhood, and the studies he had made, when his mother impelled him towards Port Royal, having resulted in farther doubts and yearning towards what Eustace had told him of our doctrine. Conversation with the learned Dr. Elson, one of our exiled divines, had completed the work, though he made his profession with pain and grief, feeling it a full severance from his country and his mother.

And the last time my dear brother left the house was to give me to his friend. He was anxious that I should be Clément's wife before he left me, and there was no fear that we should starve, for, through trustworthy merchants, a small amount of the Darpent money had been transmitted to him before the State laid hands on his property as that of a fugitive. He might have bought himself a share in one of the great trading houses, or have — which tempted him most — gone out to the plantations in the new countries of Java or America ; but Eustace prayed him to pledge himself to nothing

until he should hear from Harry Merrycourt, to whom my brother had sent a letter before quitting Paris.

We would have had a quiet wedding, but Eustace was resolved, as he said, that all the world should know that it was not done in a corner, and Madame van Hunker *would* give the wedding feast, and came to dress me for my bridal. You know the dress: the white brocade with hyacinth flowers interwoven in the tissue—and when she had curled my hair after her fancy, she kissed me and clasped round my neck the pearls of Ribaumont. I told her I would wear them then to please her and Eustace, and, in truth, I knew in my heart that I was the last true Ribaumont bride that ever would wear them. We were wedded in the chapel in Madame van Hunker's house; and the Princess-Royal was there, and the Duke of York, and my Lord and Lady of Newcastle, and I know not who besides—only remembering that they all knew how to treat Clément as a man of distinction, who had, like them, given up all for conscience sake, and he, in his plain lawyer's suit, with his fine, clear-cut face and grave eyes, looked, even in spite of his close-cropped head, as veritable a gentleman as any of them.

The festivities ended with the dinner, that being as much as my brother was able for. We went quietly back to our lodgings in Millicent's coach, and Eustace went to rest on his bed, till she should have bidden farewell to her guests and could come and sup with us; but

he and Clément forbade me to take off my finery, for it tickled their eyes.

And thus, when tidings came to the door that a gentleman from England desired to see my Lord Walwyn, Harry Merrycourt, after all these years of seeing nothing but sad-coloured Puritan dames, came in upon this magnificent being in silvered brocade.

He said he thought he had stumbled on the Princess-Royal at least, and it was a descent to hear it was only plain Mistress Darpent! Harry had a good wife of his own by that time, who suited him far better than I should have done. Indeed, I believe he had only thought of wedding me to relieve my family from me. And when he saw how unlike Mr. Darpent was to all he had ever thought or believed of Frenchmen, and heard how well he spoke English, and how he had borne himself at Paris, he quite forgave me, and only thought how he could serve Eustace, the man whom he had always loved beyond all others.

He was practising law in London still, but he had had time to repent of having been on the wrong side when he saw what it had come to, and had the Protector at the head of affairs. He said, however, that negotiations for peace with France were like to begin, and that Mr. Secretary Milton was casting about for one learned in French law to assist in drawing the papers, so that he had little doubt that Mr. Darpent would

be readily taken into one of the public offices in London.

Moreover, he said that the Walwyn property had been sequestered, but no one had yet purchased it, and he thought that for a fair sum it might be redeemed for the family.

When Eustace and Millicent found that I would not hear of keeping the pearls, declaring that such things were not fit for a poor exiled lawyer's wife, Millicent said they had always felt like hot lead on her neck. To compound the matter, Eustace persuaded her to have the chaplet valued by a Dutch jeweller, and to ask Margaret and Solivet, the guardians of the young Marquis de Nidemerle, to purchase them for him.

To Margaret was left whatever of the property M. Poligny would spare, and if Gaspard should have sons, one would bear the title of Ribaultmont, though the name would be extinct. So it was fitting that the pearls should return to that family, and the fair value, as we hoped, sufficed, in Harry Merrycourt's hands, to redeem, in my husband's name, the inheritance my brother had always destined for me.

This was the last worldly care that occupied our beloved brother. He said his work was done, and he was very peaceful and at rest. His strength failed very fast after Harry Merrycourt came. Indeed, I think he had for months lived almost more by force of strong will than

anything else, and now he said he had come to his rest. He passed away one month after my wedding, on the 16th of October 1652, very peacefully, and the last look he gave any one here was for Millicent. There was a last eager, brighter look, but that was for nothing here.

The physicians said he died of the old wound in the lungs received at Naseby, so that he gave his life as much for the cause as my father and Berenger had done, though he had had far, far more to suffer in his nine years of banishment.

We left him in a green churchyard by the waterside, and Millicent saying through her tears that he had taught her to find comfort in her married life, and that he had calmed her and left her peace and blessing now in the work before her. And then we sailed with sore hearts for England, which was England still to me, though sadly changed from what I had once known it. We had come to think that there was no hope of the right cause ever prevailing, and that all that could be done was to save our own conscience, and do our best to serve God and man. "The foundations are cast down, and what hath the righteous done?"

We were met by Harry Merrycourt, who had obtained the employment for Clément that he had hoped for. It was well, for, when Walwyn was repurchased, all our money had been sunk in it, and enough borrowed to consume the rents for some years to come, and thus we had

to live very frugally in a little house in Westminster; but as for that, I was far happier marketing in the morning with my basket on my arm, cooking my husband's supper, making his shirts, and by and by nursing my babe, than ever I had been in all the stiff state and splendour of poor Margaret's fine *salons*. Camlet suits me better than brocade, and a basket of fresh eggs better than a gold-enamelled snuff-box. While, though I did long to see the old home again, I knew it would be bare of those who had made it dear, and, besides, it would be as well that Mr. Darpent should rub off as much as might be of his French breeding before showing him among the Thistlewoods and Merrycourts, and all the rest of our country-folk. Moreover, after the stir of Paris he might have found himself dull, and he had the opportunity of studying English law; ay, and I saw him yearly winning more and more trust and confidence among those who had to do with him, and forming friendships with Mr. John Evelyn and other good men.

So, when better times came round, and we had our King and Court back, on the very day of my Harry's birth Mr. Darpent was recommended to my Lord Clarendon as too useful a secretary to be parted with, and therewith the great folk remembered that I came of an old Cavalier family. Indeed Queen Henrietta had promised my mother and sister to seek me out, though may be she would never have recollected it. After all it was the

Duke of Gloucester who' actually came and found me, riding up to our door with only one gentleman, and he no other than good old Sir Francis Ommaney.

Prince Henry was a fine youth, far handsomer and more like his blessed father than his brothers, and with as bright a wit and as winning and gracious as the King. He reproached me for not having come to see his mother, and asked merrily if I had turned Roundhead as well as Frondeuse. I told him I had a good excuse, and showed him my three children, the youngest not yet a month old, and the other two staring open-mouthed to see a Prince so like other gentlemen.

Whereupon he asked if the little one was yet christened, and did him the honour to offer to be his godfather; and he noted that little Eustace promised to be like his uncle, and spake, with tears in his eyes, of the blessing my brother had been to him in his earlier stay at Paris, and how the remembrance of that example had helped him through the days when he had to undergo the same persuasions to forsake his father's Church.

So whereas the two first christenings had been done privately, as among those under persecution, Master Harry was baptized in state and splendour in St. Margaret's Church in full and open day, with all the neighbours gaping to see the Duke come forth, leading Mistress Darpent by the hand.

Thus I had to turn out my fine gowns (grown all too

tight for me) and betake me to the Queen, who had become a little old woman, but was as gay and kind as ever, and told me much about my mother and sister. The King himself came and spoke to me, and said he supposed I wished to have the old title revived; but I told him, with all thanks, that I liked my husband better by his own name than by that which I had rather leave sacred to my brother; whereat he laughed, and said he must make a low bow to me, as being the first person he had met who had nothing to ask from him.

That was all I saw of the Court. Before many weeks had passed the cruel smallpox had carried off the young Duke of Gloucester in his twentieth year, taking him, mayhap, from the evil to come, in his bright youth and innocence, for had he lived, and kept himself unsoiled even to these days, he might have been sorely tempted to break that last promise made when he sat on his father's knee.

Soon after Madame van Hunker came to England. There was Wardour property, which had descended to her, and she was glad to have a good cause for bringing her daughter Emilia to England. My children all knew and loved the fair and saint-like lady full of alms-deeds, and with the calm face that always was ready with comfort and soothing. The very sight of it would rest the fretful, hasty spirit; and I was thankful indeed that when Emilia married, her mother still abode near to us—I felt her like my guardian spirit.

My husband kept his post till my Lord Clarendon went out and the Cabal came in, and then, not liking those he had to work with, he gave up his office, and we retired into the country, while our children were still young enough to grow up in the love to Walwyn that I had always felt.

CHAPTER XVI.

ANNORA'S HOME.

It seemed as if I had scarcely time to understand what was the meaning of my parting with my beloved brother and sister. My poor Cécile was still so ill that I could hardly attend to anything else, and when I returned in the morning I found that, missing me, she had fallen into another crisis, and that all the danger was renewed.

However, the poor frail creature lived, little as she cared to do so, except to pray for the soul of the husband to whom her whole being had been given, ever since they had wedded her to him as a mere child.

It was well that I had her to attend to, or my home would have seemed very desolate to me, empty as it now was of my brother and sister, and with my mother spending her time between her Queen and her favourite convent. Happily for me there was a change in the royal household, and my son was no longer required to be in

waiting, but was free to finish his education. Indeed, I believe the Queen had found out that Gaspard had put into King Louis's head certain strange ideas about sovereigns and subjects, so that she was glad to keep him at a distance. Queen Henrietta bade me take care what I was doing. Thus Cardinal Mazarin being absent, and the events of former years not brought to mind, it was possible to obtain permission to retire for a time to our estates. Indeed I fancy it was meant to disgrace two such Frondeuses as we were supposed to have been.

Cécile recovered something like health in the country, but she would not hear of doing anything save entering a convent. She longed to be constantly praying for her husband, and she felt herself utterly incapable of coping with the world, or educating her son. She took her little girl with her to be a *pensionnaire* at the Visitation, and entrusted her boy to me, to be brought up with mine. They have indeed always been like brothers, and to me the tenderest and most dutiful of sons. Maurice d'Aubépine never ceased to love his own mother, but as a sort of saint in a shrine, and he used to say that when he went to see her he always felt more as if he had been worshipping than making a visit.

I had learned a little prudence by my former disasters among the peasantry at Nid de Merle, and we did contrive

to make them somewhat happier and more prosperous without giving umbrage to our neighbours. They learned to love M. le Marquis with passionate devotion, and he has loved them in his turn with equal affection. I delight to hear the shouts of ecstasy with which they receive him when he is seen riding through the narrow lanes of the Bocage on a visit to his mother and his home.

The King has always treated him with distinguished politeness, but without seeming desirous to retain him about Court, so that, as you know, he has always had employment either in the army or in governments, gaining ample honour, but without enjoying personal favour or intercourse with the King, who, it may be, trusts his loyalty, without brooking his plain speaking.

I saw my sister once again. When she had at last settled in the old château, and after my son and nephew had made their first campaign at the siege of Lille, we had to join in the progress of the Court to Dunkirk and Lille to see the King's new fortifications. A strange progress it was to me, for Mademoiselle was by this time infatuated by her unfortunate passion for the Duke of Lauzun, and never ceased confiding to me her admiration and her despair whenever there was a shower of rain on his *perruque*. However, when the Duchess of Orléans crossed to England I obtained permission to go with my son to visit our relations, since it was then the object to

draw together as close as possible the links between the countries.

It was a joyous visit, though it was a shock to me to see the grand old castle of the Walwyns replaced by a square Dutch-looking brick house of many windows, only recently built, and where I remembered noble woods and grand trees to see only copse-wood and fields. But who could regret anything when I saw my dear sister, a glad, proud, happy wife and mother, a still young, active, and merry matron, dazzlingly fair as ever, among her growing sons and pretty daughters, and indeed far more handsome than when she sat in the *salons* of Paris, weary and almost fierce, in her half-tamed, wild-cat days, whereas now her step was about the house and garden everywhere, as the notable housewife and good mother.

And her husband—Mr. Darpent, as every one called him, with true English pronunciation—it amused us to see how much of an Englishman he had become, though Harry Merrycourt told us the squires had began by calling him Frenchy, and sneering at his lack of taste and skill in their sports; but they came to him whenever they had a knotty point to disentangle in law or justice, they turned to him at Quarter-Sessions for help; and though they laughed at the plans of farming, gardening, and planting he had brought from Holland, or had learned from Mr. Evelyn of Says Court, still, when they saw

that his trees grew, his crops prospered, and his sheep fetched a good price at market, some of them began to declare he was only too clever, and one or two of the more enlightened actually came privately to ask his advice.

It was pleasant to see him in his library, among books he had picked up, one by one, at stalls in London, where he read and wrote and taught his sons, never long without the door being opened by Nan to see whether his fire needed a fresh log, or whether his inkstand were full, or to announce that the pigs were in the garden, and turn out all his pupils in pursuit! Interrupt as she would, she never seemed to come amiss to him.

He was glad to talk over all the affairs of our country with us. In his office in London he had of course been abreast with facts, but he was keenly interested in all the details of the Prince's return to favour, of the Cardinal's death, of the King's assumption of the entire management of State affairs, and of the manner in which the last hopes of the Parliament of Paris had been extinguished. France was—as he allowed to my eager son—beginning to advance rapidly on the road of glory, it might be of universal empire. He agreed to it, but, said he, with a curious perverse smile: "For' all that, M. le Marquis, I remain thankful that my wife's inheritance is on this side of the Channel, and though I myself may be but an exile and a fugitive,

I rejoice that my sons and their children after them will not grow up where there is brilliancy and grandeur without, but beneath them corruption and a people's misery !”

THE END.



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